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POEMS FOR READING AND SELECTIONS FOR MEMORIZING IN THE EIGHTH YEAR

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POEMS FOR READING AND SELECTIONS FOR MEMORIZING IN THE EIGHTH YEAR

REQUIRED BY THE SYLLABUS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF THE NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

EDITED BY

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EIGHTH GRADE POEMS FOR READING

THE SKELETON IN ARMOR

Introductory Note

A thousand years ago a fierce, war-loving people lived on the Scandinavian peninsula and on the islands in the Baltic Sea. From their home in the north of Europe, they were called Northmen or Norsemen. Life for them was a constant and hard struggle. They had to contend with a severe climate and to wrest a living from a barren land and stormy seas. They took by plunder from more prosperous neighbors what home harvest and fishery and chase failed to supply. Everywhere along the shores of northern Europe the Norsemen were feared and hated as pirates.

In a Norse family where there were several sons one was chosen to stay at home and inherit his father's house and goods. He was looked upon with pity and almost scorn by his brothers. Their property was swords and boats, their home the sea. Singing wild songs of battle, they sailed or roved forth in their long, narrow boats. Laden with plunder, they returned from their summer excursions.

The long, dreary wintertime was spent, for the most part, in their rude halls. Here gathered around each prince or chief his followers and dependents. They feasted on the flesh of animals they had killed and on fish which they had caught. They filled their cups, made of the horns of cattle, from great wooden pails of ale or wine, and drank long and deep. As they ate and drank, minstrels sang battle songs or warriors told stirring tales of adventure. Such were the lives of the Norsemen.

In the eighth and ninth centuries these Norsemen threatened to overrun northern Europe. They laid waste the fair shores of England and made themselves masters of most of the land. They sailed up the rivers of France and seized lands on the coast; to say the name of Normandy bears witness to the mastership of the Northmen, or Normans as they were called in the soft French language.

Love of adventure or stress of storm bore the Norsemen across the rough seas to the west. They landed on the shores of Iceland, which they called Snowland, and established a colony there. Thence a colony went to Greenland. According to the Norse tales, they explored still farther west. About the year one thousand, the Norsemen are said to have reached the shore of America, and sailed from Newfoundland to Rhode Island. The land, fair with summer, they named Vineland. Time after time the frail boats of the Norsemen crossed the rough seas. Settlements

were established, trade carried on, the coast explored far to the south. But the few fierce, warlike Norsemen were opposed by the many fierce, warlike Indians. The settlements were destroyed and the trades broken off. The voyages to the west ceased and even the memory of them passed away.

Years went by and centuries. Then came Columbus and opened the New World to the Old. Men of many nations flocked to take possession. These Europeans found only Indians in America, and thought that they were the first white men to come to the land. But after a time they began to doubt this. The Indians had legends of pale faces seen in their land long ago. In the old Norse books were tales of voyages to a far western shore. In Dighton, Massachusetts, was a rock bearing an inscription unlike those of the Indians. At Newport, Rhode Island, was an old stone tower which some said was the mill of a colonial governor, and which others claimed was the fortress of Northmen.

Three hundred and fifty years after the Spanish discovery, there was dug up near Fall River, Massachusetts, a skeleton which was thought to be the remains of a Norse warrior. It was buried in a sitting posture and was wrapped in bark and coarse cloth. Under these coverings of bark and cloth was armor in the fashion of that worn by Norsemen. There was a plate of brass on the breast, and around the waist was a belt of brass tubes fastened together with raw-

hide. Unfortunately, the skeleton was destroyed soon after its discovery, before scholars could form any positive opinion about it. Its finding, however, brought vividly to mind the legends of the Norsemen. Many articles on the subject appeared in the newspapers and magazines. One of these was a poem, *The Skeleton in Armor,* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Longfellow said of this poem, it "was suggested to me while riding on the seashore at Newport. A year or two previous, a skeleton had been dug up at Fall River, clad in broken and corroded armor; and the idea occurred to me of connecting it with the Round Tower at Newport, generally known hitherto as the Old Wind-Mill, though now claimed by the Danes as a work of their early ancestors."

In the poem, Longfellow fancies that the figure of a Norse hero appears before him, and tells the story of his wild life, — how he hunted, feasted, and fought in his northern home, how he loved a prince's daughter and, when her hand was denied him, bore her away over sea to the far western land. There he built a tower for her abode, and there they lived and died.

The poet was still young when he wrote *The Skeleton in Armor,* but he had already written many popular poems.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was born February 27, 1807, in Portland, Maine. His childhood was spent in that city, in his mother's old home. The

house is still standing, and if you visit it you will see in the rooms many relics of the poet.

At the age of eighteen, Longfellow was graduated from Bowdoin College. Then he read law for a while in his father's office. He preferred literary to legal studies, however, and he accepted the professorship of Modern Languages in Bowdoin College. He spent three years in France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, to prepare himself for the position. One outcome of this visit to Europe was a prose work entitled *Outre-Mer*, which means beyond the sea. It is a collection of sketches made while he was abroad. Longfellow was a faithful and enthusiastic instructor. Not liking the text-books in Spanish, he wrote one for the use of his pupils.

After spending five years at Bowdoin, he was appointed professor of Modern Languages at Harvard. Again he went abroad. This time he remained two years, studying chiefly the Scandinavian languages and literature.

In 1839 appeared two volumes from his pen. One was *Hyperion*, a prose romance containing sketches of his travels; the other was *Voices of the Night*, a collection including the popular poems, *The Psalm of Life* and *The Reaper and the Flowers*.

Two years later appeared a second volume of poems, containing, among others, *The Skeleton in Armor*, *The Village Blacksmith*, *Excelsior*, and *The Wreck of the Hesperus*. Volume after volume followed, each mak-

ing the poet known to wider audiences and endearing him to more hearts.

For seventeen years Longfellow held the professorship in Harvard, then he gave it up to devote himself to the pursuit of literature. He was always enthusiastic about the study of languages. "By every language you learn," he said, "a new world is opened before you." After he resigned his professorship, he continued to reside in Cambridge. His home, the Craigie House, was a fine old colonial mansion, which had been the headquarters of Washington.

Among Longfellow's long poems, the most popular are *Evangeline*, *Hiawatha*, and *The Courtship of Miles Standish*. *Evangeline*, his own favorite, is a story of the English taking of Nova Scotia from the French in 1755. The French were driven away, and Evangeline, a young maiden, was separated from her lover. After seeking him for years, she found him, old and dying. *Hiawatha* is a collection of Indian myths and legends, clustered around the life of Hiawatha, an Indian hero, whose home was on the shores of Lake Superior. *The Courtship of Miles Standish* is a story of the early days of the Plymouth Colony, and the lovemaking by proxy of a Puritan maiden, Priscilla Mullens.

Longfellow wrote also several dramatic poems which were not especially successful,—*The Spanish Student*, *Christus*, *Michael Angelo*, and others. He made many excellent translations from foreign languages,—Italian, German, Spanish, Swedish, and others.

Longfellow is the most popular of all American poets. A critic says "his poetry is the voice of the kindliest and gentlest heart that ever poet bore." He is especially loved by children. When he died, March 24, 1882, many schoolrooms were draped in mourning. All over the land thousands of children celebrate his birthday in February as Longfellow's Day.

THE SKELETON IN ARMOR

I

"Speak! speak! thou fearful guest!
Who, with thy hollow breast
Still in rude armor drest,
  Comest to daunt me!
Wrapt not in Eastern balms,
But with thy fleshless palms
Stretched, as if asking alms,
  Why dost thou haunt me?"

II

Then, from those cavernous eyes,
Pale flashes seemed to rise,

4. **Daunt:** Give synonyms of this word, in more common use.

5. **Wrapt not, etc.:** By the Egyptians and other Eastern people, the bodies of the dead were preserved from decay with balms and aromatic oils and spices.

As when the northern skies
Gleam in December;
And, like the water's flow
Under December's snow,
Came a dull voice of woe
From the heart's chamber.

III

"I was a Viking old!
My deeds, though manifold,
No Skald in song has told,
No Saga taught thee!
Take heed, that in thy verse
Thou dost the tale rehearse,
Else a dead man's curse;
For this I sought thee.

IV

"Far in the Northern Land,
By the wild Baltic's strand,

11. **As when, etc.**: The reference here is to the Northern Lights, or Aurora Borealis, — streams of light seen on winter nights, usually above the northern horizon. They are supposed to be of electrical origin.

17. **Viking**: A Norse pirate. The name is derived from the *vicks*, or inlets, on the shore, into which the pirates ran their long, narrow boats.

19. **Skald**: Among the Scandinavian people, a poet, a singer and writer of heroic poems.

20. **Saga**: One of the historical or religious legends of the Scandinavians.

I, with my childish hand,
Tamed the gerfalcon;
And, with my skates fast bound,
Skimmed the half-frozen Sound,
That the poor whimpering hound
Trembled to walk on.

V

"Oft to his frozen lair
Tracked I the grisly bear,
While from my path the hare
Fled like a shadow;
Oft through the forest dark
Followed the werewolf's bark,
Until the soaring lark
Sang from the meadow.

VI

"But when I older grew,
Joining a corsair's crew,
O'er the dark sea I flew
With the marauders.

28. **Gerfalcon:** Gyrfalcon; a large falcon, a hawk-like bird found in northern Europe.

34. **Grisly:** Frightful; terrible. Grisly is from an old English word, *grisan*, meaning to dread. Grizzly, as in grizzly bear, is from a French word, gris, meaning gray.

38. **Werewolf:** A man wolf; according to the old German tradition, a human being who was changed or changed himself into the form of a wolf.

Wild was the life we led;
Many the souls that sped,
Many the hearts that bled,
By our stern orders.

VII

"Many a wassail-bout
Wore the long Winter out;
Often our midnight shout
Set the cocks crowing,
As we the Berserk's tale
Measured in cups of ale,
Draining the oaken pail,
Filled to o'erflowing.

VIII

"Once as I told in glee
Tales of the stormy sea,
Soft eyes did gaze on me,
Burning, yet tender;

49. **Wassail bout:** A drinking contest. Wassail is from an old Saxon expression, *weshal*, be in good health, the expression of good wishes used in drinking a person's health. The Norsemen, you remember, were deep drinkers. In this stanza Longfellow gives a vivid picture of their hall life.

53. **Berserk, or Berserker:** A Norse hero who wore "no shirt or mail," but went into battle without defensive armor. He had twelve sons, full of his wild joy in battle.

And as the white stars shine,
On the dark Norway pine,
On that dark heart of mine
Fell their soft splendor.

IX

"I wooed the blue-eyed maid,
Yielding, yet half afraid,
And in the forest's shade
Our vows were plighted.
Under its loosened vest
Fluttered her little breast,
Like birds within their nest
By the hawk frighted.

X

"Bright in her father's hall
Shields gleamed upon the wall,
Loud sang the minstrels all,
Chanting his glory;
When of old Hildebrand
I asked his daughter's hand,
Mute did the minstrel stand
To hear my story.

XI

"While the brown ale he quaffed,
Loud then the champion laughed,

And as the wind gusts waft
The sea foam brightly,
So the loud laugh of scorn,
Out of those lips unshorn,
From the deep drinking horn
Blew the foam lightly.

XII

"She was a Prince's child,
I but a Viking wild,
And though she blushed and smiled,
I was discarded!
Should not the dove so white
Follow the sea mew's flight,
Why did they leave that night
Her nest unguarded?

XIII

"Scarce had I put to sea,
Bearing the maid with me,
Fairest of all was she

87. **Drinking horn:** The Norse drinking cups were originally made from the horns of cattle.

89. **Prince's child:** Viking is sometimes confounded with sea-king, which is a very different term. A viking was a pirate, often or usually a peasant. A sea-king was any member of a royal family, whether his wealth was a kingdom or merely a boat and a sword.

Among the Norsemen!
When on the white sea strand,
Waving his armèd hand,
Saw we old Hildebrand,
With twenty horsemen.

XIV

"Then launched they to the blast,
Bent like a reed each mast,
Yet we were gaining fast,
When the wind failed us;
And with a sudden flaw
Came round the gusty Skaw,
So that our foe we saw
Laughed as he hailed us.

XV

"And as to catch the gale
Round veered the flapping sail,
'Death!' was the helmsman's hail,
'Death without quarter!'
Midships with iron keel
Struck we her ribs of steel;
Down her black hulk did reel
Through the black water!

110. **Skaw:** An Icelandic word for a headland or a projecting point of land.

XVI

"As with his wings aslant
Sails the fierce cormorant,
Seeking some rocky haunt,
With his prey laden, —
So toward the open main,
Beating to sea again,
Through the wild hurricane,
Bore I the maiden.

XVII

"Three weeks we westward bore,
And when the storm was o'er,
Cloudlike we saw the shore
Stretching to leeward;
There for my lady's bower
Built I the lofty tower,
Which to this very hour
Stands looking seaward.

XVIII

"There lived we many years;
Time dried the maiden's tears;
She had forgot her fears,

132. **Leeward:** In the direction toward which the wind blows.

134. **The lofty tower:** The round tower at Newport, Rhode Island.

She was a mother;
Death closed her mild blue eyes,
Under that tower she lies;
Ne'er shall the sun arise
On such another!

XIX

"Still grew my bosom then,
Still as a stagnant fen!
Hateful to me were men,
The sunlight hateful!
In the vast forest here,
Clad in my warlike gear,
Fell I upon my spear,
Oh, death was grateful!

XX

"Thus, seamed with many scars,
Bursting these prison bars,
Up to its native stars
My soul ascended!
There from the flowing bowl
Deep drinks the warrior's soul,
Skoal! to the Northland! *skoal!*"
Thus the tale ended.

150. **Gear:** Garments, dress; sometimes, as here, armor.

159. **Skoal:** Hail. Longfellow says, "In Scandinavian this is the customary salutation when drinking a health. I have slightly changed the orthography of the word, in order to preserve the correct pronunciation."

THE SINGING LEAVES

Introductory Note

One of the most famous books in the English language is *Pilgrim's Progress*. It was written over two hundred years ago, by a poor tinker, named John Bunyan. It has been read by children, admired by scholars, and translated into many languages.

Pilgrim's Progress is an allegory; that is, it is a story in which qualities are represented as persons. It describes the journey of Christian, a pilgrim, through this world. He is represented as going from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. On the way he has to pass through Vanity Fair. This is a fair held all the year in the town of Vanity. "It beareth the name because the town where it is kept is lighter than vanity, and also because all that is there sold or that cometh thither is vanity." And there, to distract Christian from his heavenward journey, were offered him all kinds of worldly honors and pleasures, — titles, riches, gold, silver, and jewels.

Other writers after the time of Bunyan used the term Vanity Fair to describe the earthly things which distract the heart from those which are higher and

better. Our American poet, Lowell, has a poem, *The Singing Leaves*, in which this thought is introduced.

A king, whose heart is set on pomp and splendor, asks his three daughters what gifts he shall bring them from Vanity Fair. The eldest two desire jewels and silks, but the youngest asks for the Singing Leaves, of which she has dreamed.

Gems and silks are easily found in Vanity Fair, but neither there nor elsewhere can the king, whose heart is set on vanities, find the Singing Leaves. At last they are brought to him by Walter, the page, who wins in return the hand of the princess. What are the Singing Leaves? One will say they are the melodies of the musician; another will answer they are the poet's beautiful words expressing high and noble thoughts; and still another will insist that they are the words of love by which the page won the heart of the princess. Whatever they were, they sang to the heart and the soul of the princess and made her happy, as not all the treasures of Vanity Fair could have done.

Lowell, unlike Longfellow, did not write many poems which young people enjoy. But this ballad, or story told in simple verse, is a general favorite.

Lowell's home was in Cambridge, Massachusetts, not far from Longfellow's home, the famous old "Craigie House." "Elmwood," too, is a fine old colonial mansion. It was built not long before the Revolution, by a Tory governor, one of the stamp distributers. The house, set in spacious grounds, is

surrounded by elms and ash trees, the haunts of birds and squirrels.

At "Elmwood" was born February 22, 1819, James Russell Lowell, one of our foremost American authors of prose and poetry. Young Lowell was fond of reading, but he disliked the routine of school life. Of his life at Harvard, he said that he "read almost everything except the text-books prescribed by the Faculty." After he was graduated from Harvard in 1838, he studied law for awhile, but soon turned to a literary career. His first volume of poems, entitled *A Year's Life*, was published in 1841. It contained *The Shepherd of King Admetus*, *The Heritage*, and other beautiful poems. Two years later, Lowell, with the aid of Poe, Hawthorne, and Whittier, tried to establish an American literary magazine, but only three numbers were published.

When Lowell was twenty-five, he married Miss Maria White, and through her influence he threw himself warmly into the anti-slavery cause. In 1848 were published three of Lowell's best-known poems, *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, *A Fable for Critics*, and the first series of *The Biglow Papers*. Poems more different in form and subject it would be hard to find. *The Vision of Sir Launfal* is a beautiful story poem in two parts, suggested by an old legend. The first part is preceded by an exquisite description of summer, and the second part by a description, hardly less beautiful, of winter. *A Fable for Critics* gives characteristic

sketches of the most prominent of the American authors of the day. Irving, Whittier, Longfellow, Hawthorne, and others are described in a clever, humorous way. *The Biglow Papers* is a series of poems in Yankee dialect, purporting to be written by Hosea Biglow, an uneducated Yankee farmer. The second series of *The Biglow Papers* was published twenty years later; it, like the first, was written against slavery.

When Longfellow resigned from the professorship of Modern Languages of Harvard, Lowell was appointed to succeed him. After two years of preparatory study and travel in Europe, Lowell took up the duties of the position. He was a popular professor, who "not only knew, but loved, what he taught." But he soon turned his attention to the undertaking which had attracted him fifteen years before — the effort to establish an American literary magazine. This time the effort was successful. Lowell, Longfellow, Emerson, and Holmes established the *Atlantic Monthly*, which has ever since been one of the foremost periodicals of America. For five years Lowell was its editor. For ten years he was one of the editors of the *North American Review*, in which were published his essays, afterwards collected in the volumes, *Among My Books* and *My Study Windows*. He was not too busy with prose to write many beautiful poems. *The First Snowfall* is a popular favorite. Two of his finest poems are the *Harvard Commemoration Ode*, in mem-

ory of the ninety-three Harvard men who died in the War between the States, and the *Concord Centennial Ode,* on the hundredth anniversary of the battle of Concord.

In 1877, President Hayes appointed Lowell minister to Spain, and later he was transferred to England. There he was for four years a prominent figure in social and public life. In 1885 he returned to America, honored at home and abroad, as scholar, statesman, and author. His declining years were spent at his beloved home, "Elmwood," where he died, August 12, 1891. He was buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery, near Longfellow.

THE SINGING LEAVES

I

"What fairings will ye that I bring?"
Said the King to his daughters three;
"For I to Vanity Fair am boun,
Now say what shall they be?"

Then up and spake the eldest daughter,
That lady tall and grand:
"Oh, bring me pearls and diamonds great,
And gold rings for my hand."

1. **Fairings:** Gifts, usually of trifling value, such as ribbons, purchased at a fair.

3. **Boun:** An old form of the word "bound."

Thereafter spake the second daughter,
That was both white and red:
"For me bring silks that will stand alone,
And a gold comb for my head."

Then came the turn of the least daughter,
That was whiter than thistle down,
And among the gold of her blithesome hair
Dim shone the golden crown.

"There came a bird this morning,
And sang 'neath my bower eaves,
Till I dreamed, as his music made me,
'Ask thou for the Singing Leaves.'"

Then the brow of the King swelled crimson
With a flash of angry scorn:
"Well have ye spoken, my two eldest,
And chosen as ye were born;

"But she, like a thing of peasant race,
That is happy binding the sheaves";
Then he saw her dead mother in her face,
And said, "Thou shalt have thy leaves."

15. **Blithesome:** Bright, usually in the sense of gay, cheerful.
18. **Bower:** Here used with its old meaning of chamber, bedroom.

II

He mounted and rode three days and nights
Till he came to Vanity Fair,
And 'twas easy to buy the gems and the silk,
But no Singing Leaves were there.

Then deep in the greenwood rode he,
And asked of every tree,
"Oh, if you have ever a Singing Leaf,
I pray you give it me!"

But the trees all kept their counsel,
And never a word said they,
Only there sighed from the pine tops
A music of seas far away.

Only the pattering aspen
Made a sound of growing rain,
That fell ever faster and faster,
Then faltered to silence again.

"Oh, where shall I find a little foot page
That would win both hose and shoon,
And will bring to me the Singing Leaves
If they grow under the moon?"

46. **Shoon:** The old plural form of "shoe."

Then lightly turned him Walter the page,
By the stirrup as he ran:
"Now pledge you me the truesome word
Of a king and gentleman,

"That you will give me the first, first thing
You meet at your castle gate,
And the Princess shall get the Singing Leaves,
Or mine be a traitor's fate."

The King's head dropt upon his breast
A moment, as it might be;
'Twill be my dog, he thought, and said,
"My faith I plight to thee."

Then Walter took from next his heart,
A packet small and thin,
"Now give you this to the Princess Anne,
The Singing Leaves are therein."

III

As the King rode in at his castle gate,
A maiden to meet him ran,
And "Welcome, father!" she laughed and cried
Together, the Princess Anne.

51. **Truesome:** A poetical form of true, as blithesome is of blithe.

60. **Plight:** Give as security for performance of an act. One *plights* his word or honor, and *pledges* his property or goods, that he will keep a promise.

"Lo, here the Singing Leaves," quoth he,
"And woe, but they cost me dear!"
She took the packet, and the smile
Deepened down beneath the tear.

It deepened down till it reached her heart,
And then gushed up again,
And lighted her tears as the sudden sun
Transfigures the summer rain.

And the first Leaf, when it was opened,
Sang: "I am Walter the page,
And the songs I sing 'neath thy window
Are my only heritage."

And the second Leaf sang: "But in the land
That is neither on earth nor sea,
My lute and I are lords of more
Than thrice this kingdom's fee."

And the third Leaf sang, "Be mine! Be mine!"
And ever it sang, "Be mine!"
Then sweeter it sang and ever sweeter,
And said, "I am thine, thine, thine!"

At the first Leaf she grew pale enough,
At the second she turned aside,
At the third, 'twas as if a lily flushed
With a rose's red heart's tide.

"Good counsel gave the bird," said she,
"I have my hope thrice o'er,
For they sing to my very heart," she said,
"And it sings to them evermore."

She brought to him her beauty and truth,
But and broad earldoms three,
And he made her queen of the broader lands
He held of his lute in fee.

98. **But and:** And also.
100. **In fee:** In control or possession.

HORATIUS

Introductory Note

The Skeleton in Armor is a story-poem founded on the early history of our own country. *Horatius* is a legend about the early history of Rome, the great city which for centuries ruled the world. A legend is a story in which fact and fiction are so mingled that we cannot separate them.

The early history of Rome is legendary. We are told that the city was founded seven hundred and fifty-three years before Christ, by two brothers, Romulus and Remus, of the Latin race. The Latins occupied the country called Latium, south of the river Tiber. North of the Tiber were the Etruscans, a fierce and warlike people. As a defense against these Etruscans, the Latins fortified a low hill on the bank of the Tiber. This was the beginning of the great city, Rome. Gradually, the city extended from this one hill to the six adjoining hills; those famous seven hills of Rome were surrounded by a wall. On the north was a gateway and a bridge leading to the hill Janic'ulum, which was fortified by the Romans.

According to the legends, the city was ruled first by seven kings. The first six kings were some peaceful,

some warlike, but all able and wise rulers, who advanced the city in prosperity at home and power abroad. At last there came to the throne Lucius Tarquinius, called the Proud. He was a cruel and overbearing man of the Etruscan race, and his sons were even more wicked than he. At last the people, maddened by the insult of Tarquin's son, Sextus, to a noble Roman matron, rose and drove out the Tarquin family. Rome then became a free city, ruled by two consuls chosen yearly by the people.

The Tarquins were by no means content to give up royal power. They took refuge in Etruria, and thence led an army against Rome. But they were defeated in the terrible contest which followed.

This defeat only spurred them on to greater efforts. They sought the aid of Porsena, the king of Clusium, the chief Etruscan city. It is at this point in the story that Macaulay begins his ballad, *Horatius*. Porsena agreed to aid the Tarquins, and he collected a great army of allies and friends. Etruria was a confederacy of twelve great cities, each having its own chief or king, but the king of Clusium was the chief or over-lord of them all. So Porsena collected a great army of ninety thousand men, made a sudden march against Rome, and captured Janiculum.

The Romans were in dismay. Before the invading army lay the great bridge which connected Janiculum with Rome. If this bridge were crossed, Porsena would have possession of the city and reseat the hated

Tarquin on the throne. Was the cause of freedom lost? Should the wicked Tarquins return to oppress Roman men and shame Roman women? Never, unless over his dead body, resolved the Roman patriot, Horatius. He stepped forward and bade his fellow-citizens destroy the bridge as quickly as possible. He would stand at the entrance and hold back the advancing army. Two other brave Romans, Spurius Lartius and Herminius, offered to aid him. The three advanced and stood facing the great host of Porsena.

The Etruscans laughed at the sight of three men venturing to oppose an army of nearly a hundred thousand. But the undertaking of the Romans was not so hopeless as it seemed. In those days, you know, war was very different from what it is now. Gunpowder was unknown, and the present deadly instruments of war were uninvented. Men protected their bodies with armor of iron or brass, and fought with swords and spears and battle-axes. Strength and skill of arm and courage of heart were the things that counted. A few brave men could, and often did, hold a narrow way against the attack of far superior numbers. So it was with Horatius and his companions. They were safe from the attacks of all except the few who might advance in reach of their swords.

Three brave Etruscans advanced, and were struck down by the Romans. Three others came forward — only to share the fate of their comrades. For awhile none ventured to attack the defenders of the

bridge. At last a mighty Etruscan chief came forth and fell before the sword of Horatius. Rage urged Sextus Tarquinius to advance, but fear held him back. In vain were the taunts and jeers of Horatius, whose good sword was thirsting for the blood of the man who had brought shame on a Roman matron.

Meanwhile the citizens labored with strength and speed. They cut loose the great beams and broke down the heavy timbers of the bridge. Then they called on the defenders of the bridge to hasten back to the city before the ruin fell. Lartius and Herminius crossed at once, but Horatius lingered. Perhaps he feared they would be attacked from behind if all three turned at once; perhaps he was unwilling to turn his back and flee from Sextus. At all events, he lingered until it was too late to cross the bridge. It fell and Horatius stood alone before his foes. But ere they could rush upon him, he sprang into the river, all armed as he was. Spent with wounds and fighting, weighted with armor, it seemed that he must sink. But his stout body and stout heart were in the struggle. He reached the city he had saved, and was rewarded with lands and honors by his grateful countrymen. But the greatest reward of all was that he had saved Rome from the foe.

This story belongs to a period before that of recorded history, and there are several versions of it, which differ in important points. One version says that Horatius held the bridge alone and was drowned in

his attempt to swim back to the city. Another version says that he was aided by two brave men, crossed the river safe, and received honors and rewards. It is pleasant to think that honor and success crowned so brave an undertaking, and this is the version that Macaulay chose to follow in his ballad. But, after all, the beautiful and noble thing about the story is, not the reward or result of the deed, but the deed itself, — the fact that Horatius so loved his home that he was willing to risk or to sacrifice his life in its defense. It is this courage and this patriotism which thrill our hearts. Horatius belonged to the world of long ago, and all for which he fought has long since passed away. But his spirit lives and animates every brave man. It was that spirit which nerved the little band of American patriots in their struggle against the British veterans.

Macaulay does not tell this story of Horatius, as it were, in his own person. In order to make it more vivid, and bring us closer to the events, he represents it as being told by a Roman citizen to his countrymen a hundred and twenty years after the event. This Roman tells the story with patriotic feeling and detail, as Holmes in his poem describes the battle of Bunker Hill. As the old legends did not enter into details fully enough for his purposes, Macaulay used his privilege as a poet and introduced some fictitious names and events. He makes us see the scene, the persons, the events, and gives us at the end an accurate and

vivid picture of Latin life four hundred years before the time of Christ. Macaulay entered into the life and thought of the far-off time as if it were to-day.

In two ways Macaulay was particularly fitted to write such a poem. First, he had a vivid imagination and could describe what he saw with the mind's eye just as if it had been presented to his bodily eye. Second, with his vivid imagination he united an accurate knowledge of his subject. He was a scholar of wide reading and wonderful memory. He could read a book through and then put it aside and repeat page after page without omitting or misplacing a single word. He was as familiar with the history of Rome as you are with the affairs of your schoolroom.

Thomas Babington Macaulay was born at Rothley Temple, England, October 25, 1800. As a child he was fond of reading and showed the wonderful memory of which we have spoken. He could repeat whole books of the Bible. But his memory retained chaff as well as wheat. In later years he complained that he could not forget stupid articles nor foolish newspaper verses which he had read years before. At an early age the precocious child began to express his thoughts in prose and verse. He wrote histories, tales, and heroic poems. Delighting in the romantic poems of Scott, he began a long poem in the same style.

After leaving college, Macaulay went to London and was admitted to the bar. His time was divided between politics and literature. In 1825 his essay on

Milton was published in the *Edinburgh Review.* For twenty years he contributed literary and critical essays to this magazine. These essays were widely read in America as well as in England.

In 1830 Macaulay entered Parliament as an advocate of Whig principles. For many years he was one of the most prominent members of his party in the House of Commons. In 1834 he was sent to India as a member of the Supreme Council. During his three years in India, he continued his literary and historical studies, and made himself familiar with oriental life and history.

On his return to England he again became prominent in public life. But he was not too busy with his duties in Parliament to continue his work as an author. In 1842 appeared a little volume entitled *Lays of Ancient Rome,* containing the first poems he had published since his childish attempts at verse. These lays, or ballads, are spirited narratives of Roman legends about the city's early history. *Horatius* and *Virginia* are the most popular of these poems. Macaulay wrote a few other ballads, of which *The Spanish Armada* and *The Battle of Ivry* are especially popular with young folks.

Popular as Macaulay was as an essayist and poet, his greatest work was as an historian. He planned a *History of England from the time of James II,* but he did not live to finish it. The four volumes which he published cover a period of little more than twelve

years. (A fifth volume, collected from his papers and published after his death, brings the history down to the death of William III.) Macaulay made history as interesting as a story, and the people and events he describes are brought out of the past and made real and living to us. The first two volumes of this *History* were published in 1849, and the third and fourth volumes appeared in 1855.

In 1857 the author, in recognition of his literary and political ability, was made Lord Macaulay of Rothley. He did not live long to enjoy the honors conferred on him at home and abroad. He died in London, December 28, 1859, of heart disease.

Macaulay was an eloquent, scholarly, easy-going English gentleman. He expressed few new views and advanced few new ideas. But he wrote so entertainingly of literature and history that his books were widely read and people gained information and culture on subjects which seemed stupid and dull in the pages of other authors. His easy, graceful, brilliant style made interesting every subject on which he wrote. Among his most popular essays are the ones on *Milton, Bacon, Johnson, Frederick the Great,* and *Hastings.*

HORATIUS

A LAY MADE ABOUT THE YEAR OF THE CITY CCCLX[1]

I

Lars Porsena of Clusium
  By the Nine Gods he swore
That the great house of Tarquin
  Should suffer wrong no more.
By the Nine Gods he swore it,
  And named a trysting day,

[1] The city of Rome was said to have been founded 753 B.C. In what year, then, is this lay, or ballad, represented as having been written?

1. **Lars:** The title of the chief or over-king of Etruria. When Tarquin was expelled from Rome, this rank was held by Por′ se na of Clu′ si um. Clusium was one of the chief cities of Etruria. The Etruscans or Tuscans differed in character, language, and race from the other people of Italy. They had long been the enemies of the Latin people, by whom Rome was founded. They needed only an excuse to make war upon Rome. Such an excuse was now presented to them. Tarquin, the banished king of Rome, was of the Etruscan race; his family had come from Tarquinii, an Etruscan city. So the Etruscan over-lord, Porsena, called on the Etruscan chiefs to join in reinstating their countryman on his throne.

2. **Nine Gods:** Of the many gods of the Etruscan mythology, there were nine chief gods who were supposed to have the power of hurling lightning.

6. **Trysting day:** A day, according to appointment or trust, for meeting.

And bade his messengers ride forth,
East and west, and south and north,
To summon his array.

II

East and west, and south and north,
The messengers ride fast,
And tower and town and cottage
Have heard the trumpet's blast.
Shame on the false Etruscan
Who lingers in his home,
When Porsena of Clusium
Is on the march for Rome!

III

The horsemen and the footmen
Are pouring in amain
From many a stately market place,
From many a fruitful plain;
From many a lonely hamlet,
Which, hid by beech and pine,
Like an eagle's nest, hangs on the crest
Of purple Apennine;

19. **Amain:** With force.

25. **Apennine:** Look on the map, and follow the course of the Apennines, the backbone of Italy. Why are the mountains called "purple"?

IV

From lordly Volaterræ,
Where scowls the far-famed hold
Piled by the hands of giants
For godlike kings of old;
From sea-girt Populonia,
Whose sentinels descry
Sardinia's snowy mountain tops
Fringing the southern sky;

V

From the proud mart of Pisæ
Queen of the western waves,
Where ride Massilia's triremes
Heavy with fair-haired slaves;
From where sweet Clanis wanders
Through corn and vines and flowers;
From where Cortona lifts to heaven
Her diadem of towers.

26. Vol a ter' ræ: A strongly fortified city of Etruria, built on a lofty hill and visible from a great distance.

30. Pop' u lo' ni a: The chief seaport of Etruria.

34. Pĭ' sæ: An old and important city of Etruria.

36. Mas sĭl' i a: Marseilles, a city in France.

Tri remes: Vessels having three benches or ranks of oars on each side.

38. Clăn'is: An Etruscan river which flows into the Tiber.

40. Cor to' na: One of the chief cities of Etruria.

VI

Tall are the oaks whose acorns
  Drop in dark Auser's rill;
Fat are the stags that champ the boughs
  Of the Ciminian hill;
Beyond all streams Clitumnus
  Is to the herdsman dear;
Best of all pools the fowler loves
  The great Volsinian mere.

VII

But now no stroke of woodman
  Is heard by Auser's rill;
No hunter tracks the stag's green path
  Up the Ciminian hill;
Unwatched along Clitumnus
  Grazes the milk-white steer;
Unharmed the waterfowl may dip
  In the Volsinian mere.

43. **Au' ser:** A stream of Etruria.

45. **Cim ĭn' i an hill:** A lofty hill of Etruria.

46. **Cli tŭm' nus:** An Etruscan stream which flows into the Tiber.

49. **Vol sĭn' i an mere:** A lake of Etruria, between Rome and Clusium. Mere is an old name for a body of still or stagnant water.

VIII

The harvests of Arretium
This year old men shall reap;
This year young boys in Umbro
Shall plunge the struggling sheep;
And in the vats of Luna
This year the must shall foam
Round the white feet of laughing girls
Whose sires have marched to Rome.

IX

There be thirty chosen prophets,
The wisest of the land,
Who always by Lars Porsena
Both morn and evening stand;
Evening and morn the Thirty
Have turned the verses o'er,

58. **Ar re' tium** (shm): One of the chief cities of Etruria.

60. **Um' bro**: A stream of Etruria, which flows into the Mediterranean Sea.

62. **Vats**: The wine vats. Luna was celebrated for its wines.
Lu' na: Another important Etruscan city.

63. **Must**: The juice of the grape, as yet unfermented.

64. **Round the white feet**: Wine was made by treading the grapes, and so pressing out the juice, in great wooden tubs or vats.

71. **Turned the verses o'er**: The Etruscans were a very superstitious people. Their prophets, or priests, were called on to foretell by signs the result of undertakings planned by the chiefs. These signs were drawn from thunder and light-

Traced from the right on linen white
By mighty seers of yore.

X

And with one voice the Thirty
Have their glad answer given:
"Go forth, go forth, Lars Porsena;
Go forth, beloved of Heaven;
Go, and return in glory
To Clusium's royal dome,
And hang round Nurscia's altars
The golden shields of Rome."

XI

And now hath every city
Sent up her tale of men;

ning, the flight of birds, the entrails of animals, dreams, and, as here, passages in their sacred books. The Romans adopted and practiced these superstitions of the Etruscans.

72. **From the right:** The Etruscan writing was read from right to left, instead of from left to right, as is ours.

73. **Seers:** Those who could see into the future; hence, prophets, foretellers of future events.

Yore: An old word, meaning old times.

80. **Nur' sci a:** In Etruscan mythology, the goddess of fortune.

81. **Golden shields:** It was the custom to adorn the temples with the shields of defeated enemies.

83. **Tale:** A number told or counted off; number stated as share.

The foot are fourscore thousand,
The horse are thousands ten.
Before the gates of Sutrium
Is met the great array.
A proud man was Lars Porsena
Upon the trysting day.

XII

For all the Etruscan armies
Were ranged beneath his eye,
And many a banished Roman,
And many a stout ally;
And with a mighty following
To join the muster came
The Tusculan Mamilius,
Prince of the Latian name.

XIII

But by the yellow Tiber
Was tumult and affright:
From all the spacious champaign
To Rome men took their flight.

86. **Su′ tri um:** An Etruscan town, about thirty miles from Rome.

96. **Tŭs′ cu lan:** Of Tusculum, a Latin city south of Rome. **Mam il′ i us:** A Latin prince who married the daughter of King Tarquin.

97. **Lā′ tian** (shn): Latin; of the country of Latium.

100. **Champaign:** Plain; flat, open country.

A mile around the city
The throng stopped up the ways;
A fearful sight it was to see
Through two long nights and days.

XIV

For aged folk on crutches,
And women great with child,
And mothers sobbing over babes
That clung to them and smiled,
And sick men borne in litters
High on the necks of slaves,
And troops of sunburnt husbandmen
With reaping hooks and staves,

XV

And droves of mules and asses
Laden with skins of wine,
And endless flocks of goats and sheep,
And endless herds of kine,
And endless trains of wagons
That creaked beneath the weight
Of corn sacks and of household goods,
Choked every roaring gate.

112. **Husbandmen:** What word should we use instead of this?

115. **Skins of wine:** Before glass bottles were invented, wine was kept in bottles or bags made of skin.

117. **Kine:** The old plural of cow.

XVI

Now from the rock Tarpeian
Could the wan burghers spy
The line of blazing villages
Red in the midnight sky.
The Fathers of the City,
They sat all night and day,
For every hour some horseman came
With tidings of dismay.

XVII

To eastward and to westward
Have spread the Tuscan bands;
Nor house nor fence nor dovecot
In Crustumerium stands.

122. **Rock Tar pē′ ian:** A precipice in Rome, down which traitors were thrown to their death. It was the site of a fortress. According to the old legend, the city was, on one occasion, attacked by the Sabines. Tar pē′ ia, the daughter of the commander of the fortress, agreed to open the gates to the enemy if the soldiers would give her "what they wore on their left arms." She referred to their golden bracelets, but when they had entered they threw on her their heavy shields, also borne on their left arms, and crushed her to death. From that time the precipice bore her name and was the place of execution of traitors.

123. **Wan:** Pale, as with fear.

126. **Fathers of the City:** The senators of Rome. They were three hundred in number, consisting of the heads of the family (gens) of the three original tribes of Rome.

133. **Crus tu mer′ i um:** A town of Latium, near Rome.

Verbenna down to Ostia
Hath wasted all the plain;
Astur hath stormed Janiculum,
And the stout guards are slain.

XVIII

I wis, in all the Senate,
There was no heart so bold
But sore it ached and fast it beat,
When that ill news was told.
Forthwith up rose the Consul,
Up rose the Fathers all;
In haste they girded up their gowns,
And hied them to the wall.

134. **Ver ben' na:** The old legend does not mention him.
Os' ti a: A Latin city at the mouth of the Tiber.

136. **As' tur:** He also is not mentioned in the old legend. Macaulay represents him as the prince of Luna, one of the twelve Etruscan cities.
Jan ic' u lum: A hill on the north side of the Tiber. It was connected with the city by a bridge.

138. **Wis:** Think, know, — an old word, now seldom used except in poetry.

142. **Con sul:** After the kings were expelled, the chief magistrates of Rome were two consuls, chosen annually, to command the army and to execute the decrees of the senate.

144. **Girded up their gowns:** The togas, or gowns, worn by Roman gentlemen, fell from the shoulder in long, loose folds. For freedom of action, the folds were drawn together and confined by a girdle.

145. **Hied:** Hastened.

XIX

They held a council standing
Before the River Gate;
Short time was there, ye well may guess,
For musing or debate.
Out spake the Consul roundly,
"The bridge must straight go down;
For, since Janiculum is lost,
Naught else can save the town."

XX

Just then a scout came flying,
All wild with haste and fear:
"To arms! to arms! Sir Consul;
Lars Porsena is here!"
On the low hills to westward
The Consul fixed his eye,
And saw the swarthy storm of dust
Rise fast along the sky.

XXI

And nearer fast, and nearer,
Doth the red whirlwind come;
And louder still, and still more loud,
From underneath that rolling cloud,
Is heard the trumpet's war note proud,

150. **Roundly:** Positively.

The trampling and the hum.
And plainly and more plainly
Now through the gloom appears,
Far to left and far to right,
In broken gleams of dark-blue light,
The long array of helmets bright,
The long array of spears.

XXII

And plainly and more plainly,
Above that glimmering line.
Now might ye see the banners
Of twelve fair cities shine;
But the banner of proud Clusium
Was highest of them all,
The terror of the Umbrian,
The terror of the Gaul.

XXIII

And plainly and more plainly
Now might the burghers know,

177. **Twelve fair cities:** The Etruscan power consisted of a league of twelve cities, or districts, with twelve cities at their head.

180. **Um' bri an:** The Italian tribe, or tribes, of Mutria, the mountainous country east of Etruria, with which the Etruscans were often at war.

181. **Gaul:** The old name of France. The fierce Etruscan pirates often plundered French shores.

By port and vest, by horse and crest,
Each warlike Lucumo.
There Cilnius of Arretium
On his fleet roan was seen;
And Astur of the fourfold shield,
Girt with the brand none else may wield,
Tolumnius with the belt of gold,
And dark Verbenna from the hold
By reedy Thrasymene.

XXIV

Fast by the royal standard,
O'erlooking all the war,
Lars Porsena of Clusium
Sat in his ivory car.
By the right wheel rode Mamilius,
Prince of the Latian name;

184. **Port and vest:** Bearing and dress. The vest was originally a robe or outer covering.

185. **Lu′ cu mo:** An under-king of Etruria; a chief chosen for life to rule over one of its twelve cities.

186. **Cil′ ni us:** An Etruscan lucumo, from the city of Arretium.

190. **To lŭm′ ni us:** The lucumo of Veii, one of the twelve cities of the Etruscan league.

192. **Thras′ y mene:** A lake of Etruria, near Cortona.

193. **Fast by:** Close to.

194. **War:** A poetical use of the word, in the sense of army, forces prepared for war.

And by the left false Sextus,
That wrought the deed of shame.

XXV

But when the face of Sextus
Was seen among the foes,
A yell that rent the firmament
From all the town arose.
On the house tops was no woman
But spat towards him and hissed,
No child but screamed out curses
And shook its little fist.

XXVI

But the Consul's brow was sad,
And the Consul's speech was low,
And darkly looked he at the wall,
And darkly at the foe.
"Their van will be upon us

199. **Sextus:** The second son of Tarquin, the Proud. His "deed of shame," his insults to Lucretia, a noble Roman matron, was the immediate cause of the banishment of the Tarquin family. Lucretia, telling her friends to avenge her fate, stabbed herself to the heart. The people rose and drove the wicked Tarquins from the city, choosing consuls to rule them instead of kings.

213. **Van:** The abbreviated form of vanguard, meaning the front line or division of an army or fleet.

Before the bridge goes down;
And if they once may win the bridge,
What hope to save the town?"

XXVII

Then out spake brave Horatius,
The Captain of the Gate:
"To every man upon this earth
Death cometh soon or late.
And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers
And the temples of his gods,

XXVIII

"And for the tender mother
Who dandled him to rest,
And for the wife who nurses
His baby at her breast,
And for the holy maidens

217. **Horatius:** A noble Roman of the tribe of the Lu ce′ res, one of the three original tribes of Rome. He was called Horatius Co′ cles, the one-eyed.

219–240. What does this speech of Horatius show as to his character and motives?

229. **Holy maidens:** Six maidens chosen from the noblest families of Rome to attend in the temple of the goddess Vesta. Their chief duty was to watch and feed "the eternal flame," this sacred fire which was never allowed to go out.

Who feed the eternal flame,
To save them from false Sextus
That wrought the deed of shame?

XXIX

"Hew down the bridge, Sir Consul,
With all the speed ye may;
I, with two more to help me,
Will hold the foe in play.
In yon strait path a thousand
May well be stopped by three.
Now who will stand on either hand,
And keep the bridge with me?"

XXX

Then out spake Spurius Lartius;
A Ramnian proud was he:
"Lo, I will stand at thy right hand,
And keep the bridge with thee."
And out spake strong Herminius;
Of Titian blood was he:

241. **Spu' ri us Lär' tius** (shus): A noble Roman; a Ram'-ni an, one of the tribe of Ram' nes, which was one of the three original tribes of Rome.

245. **Her min' i us**: A noble Roman. He was a Ti' tian (shan), that is, one of the tribe of Tities, one of the three original tribes of Rome. The three defenders of the bridge thus represent the three great tribes of Rome.

"I will abide on thy left side,
And keep the bridge with thee."

XXXI

"Horatius," quoth the Consul,
"As thou sayest, so let it be."
And straight against that great array
Forth went the dauntless Three.
For Romans in Rome's quarrel
Spared neither land nor gold,
Nor son nor wife, nor limb nor life,
In the brave days of old.

XXXII

Then none was for a party;
Then all were for the State;
Then the great man helped the poor,
And the poor man loved the great:
Then lands were fairly portioned;
Then spoils were fairly sold;
The Romans were like brothers
In the brave days of old.

249. **Quoth:** An old word, meaning said.

264. The teller of the story looks back a hundred and twenty years to the "good old times," and compares them with the situation in his own day.

XXXIII

Now Roman is to Roman
More hateful than a foe;
And the Tribunes beard the high,
And the Fathers grind the low.
As we wax hot in faction,
In battle we wax cold;
Wherefore men fight not as they fought
In the brave days of old.

XXXIV

Now while the Three were tightening
Their harness on their backs,
The Consul was the foremost man
To take in hand an ax;
And Fathers mixed with Commons
Seized hatchet, bar, and crow,
And smote upon the planks above,
And loosed the props below.

267. **Trib'unes:** Roman officers appointed to guard the rights of the plebs, or common people, against the patricians or nobles. Their houses were places of refuge, and they had the right to veto laws passed by the senate which were injurious to the plebs.

269. **Wax:** Grow; become.

274. **Harness:** Defensive armor; a covering made of metal plates worn by soldiers to protect them against the weapons of the enemy.

277. **Commons:** The common people, or plebs, as distinguished from the nobles.

XXXV

Meanwhile the Tuscan army,
Right glorious to behold,
Came flashing back the noonday light,
Rank behind rank, like surges bright
Of a broad sea of gold.
Four hundred trumpets sounded
A peal of warlike glee,
As that great host, with measured tread,
And spears advanced, and ensigns spread,
Rolled slowly towards the bridge's head,
Where stood the dauntless Three.

XXXVI

The Three stood calm and silent
And looked upon the foes,
And a great shout of laughter
From all the vanguard rose;
And forth three chiefs came spurring
Before that deep array:
To earth they sprang, their swords they drew,
And lifted high their shields, and flew
To win the narrow way;

XXXVII

Aunus from green Tifernum,
Lord of the Hill of Vines;
And Seius, whose eight hundred slaves
Sicken in Ilva's mines;
And Picus, long to Clusium
Vassal in peace and war,
Who led to fight his Umbrian powers
From that gray crag where, girt with towers,
The fortress of Nequinum lowers
O'er the pale waves of Nar.

XXXVIII

Stout Lartius hurled down Aunus
Into the stream beneath;
Herminius struck at Seius,
And clove him to the teeth;
At Picus brave Horatius
Darted one fiery thrust,

301. **Au' nus:** A name not in the old legend.

Ti fĕr' num: A town of Umbria, just across the Tiber from Etruria.

303. **Sē' ius:** Another name introduced by Macaulay, which is not found in the old legend.

304. **Il' va:** Elba, an island off the Etruscan shore, then, as now, famous for its iron mines.

305. **Pī' cus:** An Umbrian chief.

309. **Ne qui' num:** A city of Umbria.

310. **När:** A small stream of Umbria.

And the proud Umbrian's gilded arms
Clashed in the bloody dust.

XXXIX

Then Ocnus of Falĕrii
Rushed on the Roman Three
And Lausulus of Urgo,
The rover of the sea;
And Aruns of Volsinium,
Who slew the great wild boar,
The great wild boar that had his den
Amidst the reeds of Cosà's fen,
And wasted fields and slaughtered men
Along Albinia's shore.

XL

Herminius smote down Aruns;
Lartius laid Ocnus low;

319. **Oc nus**: A name introduced into the legend by Macaulay.

Fa lē′ ri i: A city of Etruria.

321. **Ur′ go**: The old name of Gorgona, a small island north of Elba.

323. **Ar′ uns**: Another name introduced by Macaulay.

Vol sĭn′ i um: One of the chief Etruscan cities; it was situated on the lake of the same name.

324. **The great wild boar**: During the time of Porsena, a huge and very fierce wild boar invaded this part of Etruria.

326. **Co′ sa**: A city of Etruria.

328. **Al bin′ i a**: A small river of Etruria.

Right to the heart of Lausulus
Horatius sent a blow.
"Lie there," he cried, "fell pirate!
No more, aghast and pale,
From Ostia's walls the crowd shall mark
The track of thy destroying bark.
No more Campania's hinds shall fly
To woods and caverns when they spy
Thy thrice accursed sail."

XLI

But now no sound of laughter
Was heard among the foes;
A wild and wrathful clamor
From all the vanguard rose.
Six spears' length from the entrance
Halted that deep array,
And for a space no man came forth
To win the narrow way.

XLII

But hark! the cry is Astur;
And lo! the ranks divide,
And the great Lord of Luna

333. **Fell:** Fierce; savage.
337. **Cam pa′ ni a:** A province of Italy in which is situated Vesuvius.
Hinds: Peasants; countrymen.

Comes with his stately stride.
Upon his ample shoulders
Clangs loud the fourfold shield,
And in his hand he shakes the brand
Which none but he can wield.

XLIII

He smiled on those bold Romans
A smile serene and high;
He eyed the flinching Tuscans,
And scorn was in his eye.
Quoth he, "The she-wolf's litter
Stand savagely at bay;
But will ye dare to follow,
If Astur clears the way?"

XLIV

Then, whirling up his broadsword
With both hands to the height,
He rushed against Horatius,
And smote with all his might.
With shield and blade Horatius
Right deftly turned the blow.

360. She-wolf's litter: According to the old legend, Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, were, when infants, cast out to die, but were nourished by a wolf with her own young.

361. At bay: Like wild animals, turning and facing the enemy when escape is impossible.

The blow, though turned, came yet too nigh;
It missed his helm, but gashed his thigh:
The Tuscans raised a joyful cry
To see the red blood flow.

XLV

He reeled and on Herminius
He leaned one breathing space,
Then, like a wild-cat mad with wounds,
Sprang right at Astur's face.
Through teeth and skull and helmet
So fierce a thrust he sped,
The good sword stood a handbreadth out
Behind the Tuscan's head.

XLVI

And the great Lord of Luna
Fell at that deadly stroke,
As falls on Mount Alvernus
A thunder-smitten oak.
Far o'er the crashing forest
The giant arms lie spread;

371. **Helm:** Helmet; defensive armor for the head.

384. **Mount Al ver' nus:** A mountain of Etruria.

385. **Thunder-smitten:** Struck by thunder. According to the old belief, it was thunder, not lightning, which struck and destroyed.

And the pale augurs, muttering low,
Gaze on the blasted head.

XLVII

On Astur's throat Horatius
Right firmly pressed his heel,
And thrice and four times tugged amain
Ere he wrenched out the steel.
"And see," he cried, "the welcome,
Fair guests, that waits you here
What noble Lucumo comes next
To taste our Roman cheer?"

XLVIII

But at his haughty challenge
A sullen murmur ran,
Mingled of wrath and shame and dread,
Along that glittering van.
There lacked not men of prowess,
Nor men of lordly race;
For all Etruria's noblest
Were round the fatal place.

388. **Au′ gurs:** Priests who foretold future events by signs. One of the chief ways among the Etruscans was by signs in the heavens, especially by thunder and lightning.

XLIX

But all Etruria's noblest
  Felt their hearts sink to see
On the earth the bloody corpses,
  In the path the dauntless Three;
And, from the ghastly entrance
  Where those bold Romans stood,
All shrank, like boys who, unaware,
Ranging the woods to start a hare,
Come to the mouth of the dark lair
Where, growling low, a fierce old bear
  Lies amidst bones and blood.

L

Was none who would be foremost
  To lead such dire attack;
But those behind cried "Forward!"
  And those before cried "Back!"
And backward now and forward
  Wavers the deep array;
And on the tossing sea of steel
To and fro the standards reel,
And the victorious trumpet peal
  Dies fitfully away.

418. **Dire**: Dreadful, terrible.

LI

Yet one man for one moment
Strode out before the crowd;
Well known was he to all the Three,
And they gave him greeting loud.
"Now welcome, welcome, Sextus!
Now welcome to thy home!
Why dost thou stay and turn away?
Here lies the road to Rome."

LII

Thrice looked he at the city,
Thrice looked he at the dead;
And thrice came on in fury,
And thrice turned back in dread;
And, white with fear and hatred,
Scowled at the narrow way
Where, wallowing in a pool of blood,
The bravest Tuscans lay.

LIII

But meanwhile ax and lever
Have manfully been plied,
And now the bridge hangs tottering
Above the boiling tide.
"Come back, come back, Horatius!"

Loud cried the Fathers all.
"Back, Lartius! back, Herminius!
Back, ere the ruin fall!"

LIV

Back darted Spurius Lartius,
Herminius darted back;
And, as they passed, beneath their feet
They felt the timbers crack.
But when they turned their faces,
And on the farther shore
Saw brave Horatius stand alone,
They would have crossed once more.

LV

But with a crash like thunder
Fell every loosened beam,
And, like a dam, the mighty wreck
Lay right athwart the stream;
And a long shout of triumph
Rose from the walls of Rome,
As to the highest turret tops
Was splashed the yellow foam.

457. Horatius was the first to advance to the defense of the bridge. What reasons can you suggest why he was the last to leave the post?

465. **Turret:** Small tower.

LVI

And, like a horse unbroken
When first he feels the rein,
The furious river struggled hard,
And tossed his tawny mane,
And burst the curb and bounded,
Rejoicing to be free,
And, whirling down in fierce career
Battlement and plank and pier,
Rushed headlong to the sea.

LVII

Alone stood brave Horatius
But constant still in mind,
Thrice thirty thousand foes before
And the broad flood behind.
"Down with him!" cried false Sextus,
With a smile on his pale face.
"Now yield thee," cried Lars Porsena,
"Now yield thee to our grace."

LVIII

Round turned he, as not deigning
Those craven ranks to see;
Naught spake he to Lars Porsena,
To Sextus naught spake he;

485. **Craven:** Cowardly.

But (he saw on Palatinus
The white porch of his home,
And he spake to the noble river
That rolls by the towers of Rome:

LIX

"O Tiber! father Tiber!
To whom the Romans pray,
A Roman's life, a Roman's arms,
Take thou in charge this day!"
So he spake, and speaking sheathed
The good sword by his side,
And with his harness on his back
Plunged headlong in the tide.

LX

No sound of joy or sorrow
Was heard from either bank.
But friends and foes in dumb surprise,
With parted lips and straining eyes,
Stood gazing where he sank;
And when above the surges

488. **Pal a tī' nus:** One of the seven hills on which Rome was built.

492. **Father Tiber:** The Romans, like the Greeks, believed that trees, hills, and streams had their guardian gods. The guardian god of the river Tiber was represented as a venerable old man. Horatius, as he committed himself to the river, called on its guardian spirit to aid him.

They saw his crest appear,
All Rome sent forth a rapturous cry,
And even the ranks of Tuscany
Could scarce forbear to cheer.

LXI

But fiercely ran the current,
Swollen high by months of rain;
And fast his blood was flowing,
And he was sore in pain,
And heavy with his armor,
And spent with changing blows;
And oft they thought him sinking,
But still again he rose.

LXII

Never, I ween, did swimmer,
In such an evil case,
Struggle through such a raging flood
Safe to the landing place;
But his limbs were borne up bravely
By the brave heart within,
And our good father Tiber
Bare bravely up his chin.

518. **Ween:** Think.

525. **Bare bravely up his chin:** The river-god is represented as holding up Horatius's head to keep him from drowning.

LXIII

"Curse on him!" quoth false Sextus;
"Will not the villain drown?
But for this stay, ere close of day
We should have sacked the town!"
"Heaven help him!" quoth Lars Porsena,
"And bring him safe to shore;
For such a gallant feat of arms
Was never seen before."

LXIV

And now he feels the bottom;
Now on dry earth he stands;
Now round him throng the Fathers
To press his gory hands;
And now, with shouts and clapping
And noise of weeping loud,
He enters through the River Gate,
Borne by the joyous crowd.

LXV

They gave him of the corn land,
That was of public right,

529. **Sacked:** Plundered; laid waste. The word comes from a Latin word, meaning bag, from the bags on which booty was packed to carry it off.

542. **Corn land:** When the Romans conquered territory, they took part of it as public property. Grants of this public land were sometimes made, as rewards for public service.

As much as two strong oxen
Could plow from morn till night;
And they made a molten image
And set it up on high,
And there it stands unto this day
To witness if I lie.

LXVI

It stands in the Comitium,
Plain for all folk to see,
Horatius in his harness
Halting upon one knee;
And underneath is written,
In letters all of gold,
How valiantly he kept the bridge
In the brave days of old.

LXVII

And still his name sounds stirring
Unto the men of Rome,
As the trumpet-blast that cries to them
To charge the Volscian home;

546. **Molten image**: A statue of bronze, made by melting metal and pouring it into a mold.

550. **Co mi' tium** (shum): The public square in Rome where the patricians assembled to elect officers and to pass laws.

561. **Vol' scian** (shn): A tribe which occupied part of the Latin territory. The Romans were at war with the Volscians at the time of which Macaulay represents this ballad as having been written.

And wives still pray to Juno
For boys with hearts as bold
As his who kept the bridge so well
In the brave days of old.

LXVIII

And in the nights of winter,
When the cold north winds blow,
And the long howling of the wolves
Is heard amidst the snow;
When round the lonely cottage
Roars loud the tempest's din,
And the good logs of Algidus
Roar louder yet within;

LXIX

When the oldest cask is opened,
And the largest lamp is lit;
When the chestnuts glow in the embers,
And the kid turns on the spit;
When young and old in circle
Around the firebrands close;

562. **Ju'no:** One of the chief goddesses of the Roman mythology; mothers especially were under her protecting care.

572. **Al gĭ' dus:** A wooded hill about twelve miles from Rome.

574–585. Consider carefully the picture here presented of the home life of the Romans.

When the girls are weaving baskets,
And the lads are shaping bows;

LXX

When the goodman mends his armor,
And trims his helmet's plume;
When the goodwife's shuttle merrily
Goes flashing through the loom;
With weeping and with laughter
Still is the story told,
How well Horatius kept the bridge
In the brave days of old.

582. **Goodman:** Husband; master of the house.

RHŒCUS

Introductory Note

We know that the earth with all that is in it is the work of God. To him the grain of sand and the mighty mountain, the sunbeam and the lightning, owe their existence. He created the gentle lamb and the raging lion, and man himself, the crown of creation. But there are people to whom the very name of God is unknown. They look abroad upon the beauty and the glory of the world, but it tells them nothing of the one great God who created all things. Such a people were the ancient Greeks.

The country of the Greeks was small, but beautiful with streams and valleys, mountains and sea. On the east, west, and south was the sea, but on the north the mountains rose like a great wall.

The Greeks were a wise and skillful people. They carved beautiful statues and erected noble buildings. Their scholars and poets and statesmen were the greatest in the world. But the Greeks were not merely artists and scholars. They were a strong, brave, active people, who loved outdoor life. As they looked on the beautiful world around them they wondered and questioned. How did it all come to exist? No

human hands could form the flower or the blade of grass, no mortal power could make the streams flow, the mountains rise, the forests grow — yet all these things must have had a maker and a Creator. Who was it?

Because they knew nothing of God and little of the laws of nature by which he governs our world, the Greeks tried to make up explanations of these things for themselves. They felt that strong, wise beings must have created this great, beautiful world. They fancied that there were many gods, who ruled different elements and cared for different objects. They thought that the greatest of these gods lived on the top of a lofty mountain. They pictured these gods as very much like men, but wiser and more powerful and more beautiful.

The Greeks fancied that every object or phenomenon of nature had some being governing it and directing its course. The dawn was a fair maiden, who, with rosy fingers, drew aside the veil of night. The sun was a beautiful youth who drove a golden chariot across the heavens. When the waves rose in tempest, they said that the god who ruled the sea was angry. When the clouds darkened and lightning flashed and thunder pealed, they thought that the god who ruled the skies was hurling his weapons against his enemies. They thought that a naiad or water spirit lived in each river and brook and fountain. They heard its voice in the ripple or rush of waters. They said that

each tree had its dryad, or wood-nymph, who made its welfare her care and who lived and died with it. When the trees rustled in the breeze, the Greeks thought that these dryads were talking together. As Greek boys and girls wandered through field and forest, they fancied these gentle spirits of the woods and waters were very near them. The murmur of their voices might be heard or a glimpse caught of their green or misty robes. But to human eyes the dryads and naiads were invisible. Sometimes, it was believed, they could and did make themselves seen and heard of mortals. Our American poet, Lowell, has a poem, founded on the Greek belief in dryads, in which he represents a wood-nymph as appearing to a mortal. The poem is as beautiful as the Greek fancy which suggested it.

Before Lowell begins the story which he has to tell, he gives us some thoughts suggested by it. He tells us that God reveals himself in some way to all people, and that there is some truth at the bottom of every form of worship which has won man's belief. So, though this story is only a myth, a tale invented by man, it can teach us truth.

A Greek youth, Rhœcus, wandering through a wood, saw a fair oak tree nearly uprooted, and paused to prop it. The grateful dryad of the tree appeared to him and offered to grant whatever wish he might make. He asked her love. She bade him return to her an hour before the sunset; then she disappeared.

Rhœcus, returning to the city, joined some comrades at play, and became absorbed in the game. The hour appointed by the dryad came, and found Rhœcus forgetful. Then the dryad sent a bee as her messenger to remind him of the tryst, but the bee was driven off, once, twice, and thrice, by the youth's angry hand. It flew away, and Rhœcus, looking up, beheld the setting sun and remembered his broken tryst. He sped to the forest, but alas! in the twilight naught was to be seen but the oak tree. A sad voice said that he could nevermore behold the gentle dryad. In vain Rhœcus begged forgiveness. No one had power to remove the penalty he had brought upon himself. His opportunity had come and had passed, neglected by him. Nor could the gentle dryad appear to the ungentle one who had scorned and hurt her humble messenger. And henceforth Rhœcus was alone.

In *The Singing Leaves*, Lowell told a story and left the reader to gather its thought and meaning for himself. But in *Rhœcus* the poet puts into beautiful words the thoughts suggested to him by the story. The words are so full of meaning that you will have to read them very carefully to get their full force. Read with careful thought the introductory passage and the closing stanzas. They will explain the poem to you and help you to understand why the dryad had to remain invisible to Rhœcus.

RHŒCUS

I

God sends his teachers unto every age,
To every clime and every race of men,
With revelations fitted to their growth
And shape of mind, nor gives the realm of Truth
Into the selfish rule of one sole race:
Therefore each form of worship that hath swayed
The life of man, and given it to grasp
The master key of knowledge, reverence,
Infolds some germs of goodness and of right;
Else never had the eager soul, which loathes
The slothful down of pampered ignorance,
Found in it even a moment's fitful rest.

II

There is an instinct in the human heart
Which makes that all the fables it hath coined,
To justify the reign of its belief
And strengthen it by beauty's right divine,
Veil in their inner cells a mystic gift,
Which, like the hazel twig, in faithful hands,
Points surely to the hidden springs of truth.
For, as in Nature naught is made in vain,

18. **The hazel twig:** According to an old rural superstition, a hazel twig would indicate underground springs of water.

But all things have within their hull of use
A wisdom and a meaning which may speak
Of spiritual secrets to the ear
Of spirit; so, in whatsoe'er the heart
Hath fashioned for a solace to itself,
To make its inspirations suit its creed,
And from the niggard hands of falsehood wring
Its needful food of truth, there ever is
A sympathy with Nature, which reveals,
Not less than her own works, pure gleams of light
And earnest parables of inward lore.
Hear now this fairy legend of old Greece,
As full of gracious youth and beauty still
As the immortal freshness of that grace
Carved for all ages on some Attic frieze.

III

A youth named Rhœcus, wandering in the wood,
Saw an old oak just trembling to its fall,
And, feeling pity of so fair a tree,
He propped its gray trunk with admiring care,
And with a thoughtless footstep loitered on.
But, as he turned, he heard a voice behind
That murmured "Rhœcus!" 'Twas as if the leaves,

35. **Attic:** Of Attica. Athens, the chief city of Attica, was the center of Greek art.

Frieze: The flat part of a column below the cornice which was often ornamented with sculpture.

36. **Rhœcus:** Rē′ kus.

Stirred by a passing breath, had murmured it.
And while he paused bewildered, yet again
It murmured "Rhœcus!" softer than a breeze.
He started and beheld with dizzy eyes
What seemed the substance of a happy dream
Stand there before him, spreading a warm glow
Within the green glooms of the shadowy oak.
It seemed a woman's shape, yet far too fair
To be a woman, and with eyes too meek
For any that were wont to mate with gods.
All naked like a goddess stood she there,
And like a goddess all too beautiful
To feel the guilt-born earthliness of shame.
"Rhœcus, I am the Dryad of this tree,"
Thus she began, dropping her low-toned words
Serene, and full, and clear, as drops of dew,
"And with it I am doomed to live and die;
The rain and sunshine are my caterers,
Nor have I other bliss than simple life;
Now ask me what thou wilt that I can give,
And with a thankful joy it shall be thine."

IV

Then Rhœcus, with a flutter at the heart,
Yet by the prompting of such beauty bold,
Answered: "What is there that can satisfy
The endless craving of the soul but love?
Give me thy love, or but the hope of that

Which must be evermore my nature's goal."
After a little pause she said again,
But with a glimpse of sadness in her tone,
"I give it, Rhœcus, though a perilous gift;
An hour before the sunset meet me here."
And straightway there was nothing he could see
But the green glooms beneath the shadowy oak,
And not a sound came to his straining ears
But the low trickling rustle of the leaves,
And far away upon an emerald slope
The falter of an idle shepherd's pipe.

V

Now, in those days of simpleness and faith,
Men did not think that happy things were dreams
Because they overstepped the narrow bourn
Of likelihood, but reverently deemed
Nothing too wondrous or too beautiful
To be the guerdon of a daring heart.
So Rhœcus made no doubt that he was blest,
And all along unto the city's gate
Earth seemed to spring beneath him as he walked,
The clear, broad sky looked bluer than its wont,
And he could scarce believe he had not wings,

82. **Bourn:** bound; limit; originally a stream or rivulet, the usual boundary beween lands.

85. **Guerdon:** Reward; recompense, either good or bad, according to one's deserts.

89. **Wont:** Custom.

Such sunshine seemed to glitter through his veins
Instead of blood, so light he felt and strange.

VI

Young Rhœcus had a faithful heart enough,
But one that in the present dwelt too much,
And, taking with blithe welcome whatsoe'er
Chance gave of joy, was wholly bound in that,
Like the contented peasant of a vale
Deemed it the world and never looked beyond.
So, haply meeting in the afternoon
Some comrades who were playing at the dice,
He joined them, and forgot all else besides.

VII

The dice were rattling at the merriest,
And Rhœcus, who had met but sorry luck,
Just laughed in triumph at a happy throw?
When through the room there hummed a yel-
low bee
That buzzed about his ear with down-dropped legs
As if to light. And Rhœcus laughed and said,
Feeling how red and flushed he was with loss,
"By Venus! does he take me for a rose?"
And brushed him off with rough, impatient
hand.

99. **Haply:** By hap or chance.
109. **Venus:** In Greek mythology, the goddess of beauty.

But still the bee came back, and thrice again
Rhœcus did beat him off with growing wrath.
Then through the window flew the wounded bee,
And Rhœcus, tracking him with angry eyes,
Saw a sharp mountain peak of Thessaly
Against the red disk of the setting sun, —
And instantly the blood sank from his heart,
As if its very walls had caved away.
Without a word he turned, and, rushing forth,
Ran madly through the city and the gate,
And o'er the plain, which now the wood's long shade,
By the low sun thrown forward broad and dim,
Darkened well-nigh unto the city's wall.

VIII

Quite spent and out of breath he reached the tree,
And, listening tearfully, he heard once more
The low voice murmur "Rhœcus!" close at hand;
Whereat he looked around him, but could see
Naught but the deepening glooms beneath the oak.
Then sighed the voice: "O Rhœcus! nevermore
Shalt thou behold me or by day or night,
Me, who would fain have blessed thee with a love
More ripe and bounteous than ever yet

115. **Thessaly:** One of the divisions of ancient Greece, a beautiful vally walled in by rugged mountains.

Filled up with nectar any mortal heart;
But thou didst scorn my humble messenger,
And sent'st him back to me with bruised wings.
We spirits only show to gentle eyes,
We ever ask an undivided love,
And he who scorns the least of Nature's works
Is thenceforth exiled and shut out from all.
Farewell! for thou canst never see me more."

IX

Then Rhœcus beat his breast and groaned aloud,
And cried, "Be pitiful! forgive me yet
This once, and I shall never need it more!"
"Alas!" the voice returned, "'tis thou art blind.
Not I unmerciful; I can forgive,
But have no skill to heal thy spirit's eyes;
Only the soul hath power o'er itself."
With that again there murmured "Nevermore!"
And Rhœcus after heard no other sound
Except the rattling of the oak's crisp leaves,
Like the long surf upon a distant shore
Raking the sea-worn pebbles up and down.
The night had gathered round him; o'er the plain
The city sparkled with its thousand lights,
And sounds of revel fell upon his ear
Harshly and like a curse; above, the sky,

133. **Nectar:** According to Greek mythology, the drink of the gods; hence, any delicious or inspiring drink.

With all its bright sublimity of stars,
Deepened, and on his forehead smote the breeze;
Beauty was all around him and delight,
But from that eve he was alone on earth.

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

Introductory Note

This poem of Browning's is founded on an event, real or fictitious, in the career of Napoleon. Napoleon was, perhaps, the greatest military genius that modern times have produced. He was of Italian descent. At the age of ten he went from his humble home to a French military school. As a young man he distinguished himself fighting against the royalists in the French Revolution. Later, he was put in charge of the French army in Italy. With his successful campaign there, began a career of victory which continued over fifteen years. France delighted to honor her adopted son, who led her armies to conquest. At the will of his ambition her blood and treasure were poured forth like water. Under the title of First Consul, he was made chief magistrate of France; later, he became Emperor of the French.

In 1809 Napoleon seemed at the height of earthly glory. He had met and defeated the greatest armies of continental Europe, and had made peace on his own terms. He had changed the map of Europe. France extended from Denmark to beyond the Tiber

in Italy. Napoleon, on the throne of France, was surrounded by subject kingdoms which he had given to his relatives and friends. He had made three of his brothers kings; two of his sisters were princesses, and the third was a queen.

Eager for new victories, in 1809 Napoleon provoked a war with Austria, and marched his army into Austria. Part of the Austrian army, commanded by Grand Duke Charles, made a stand at Ratisbon, a famous old city on the Danube River. Napoleon ordered his troops, commanded by brave Marshal Lannes, to attack the city. The emperor stationed himself on a little eminence far enough away to see the course of the battle and near enough to direct its movements. This, you know, is the way in which a general now directs an army, instead of going before it, sword in hand, as did kings and generals in old times.

Anxiously Napoleon watched the course of the battle. The Austrians stoutly defended the city, which the French bravely attacked. While the emperor's eye was striving to pierce the smoke and dust and confusion which veiled the battle, there galloped up a French lad. Proudly and joyfully the youth announced that Ratisbon was taken. He himself had raised the French flag there.

The emperor's eye kindled with joy at the news of victory. A moment later he turned again to the gallant young messenger, — "You're wounded!" "Nay, I'm killed, sire," answered the boy, and fell

dying to the ground — even in death smiling in pride of victory and devotion to the emperor.

This incident may or may not be true to fact, but it is true to life. One element of Napoleon's greatness was the enthusiasm and devotion with which he inspired his soldiers. Many incidents are told in illustration of their loving loyalty. After one battle the surgeons were probing the breast of a wounded soldier, to find the ball embedded there. "A little deeper and you will find the emperor," he said, as the knife pierced near his heart. It is sad to think that this devotion was utilized by Napoleon, not in a noble cause, but in advancing his own selfish ambition.

Ratisbon was taken in April, 1809, and three months later the Austrians were totally defeated in a great battle. But from the height of his glory Napoleon was to fall. He led his soldiers into Russia, and winter and famine almost destroyed his army. Europe rose against him, and at last, defeated in the decisive battle of Waterloo, in 1815, he was sent to the island of St. Helena. There, an exiled prisoner, he died a few years later.

You will be interested in comparing an *Incident of the French Camp* with *Horatius*. Both tell of the brave deeds of soldiers ready to sacrifice their lives for the cause they loved.

Horatius risked his life as a patriot in defense of his home against the enemy. The French lad died

gladly and bravely, a sacrifice to the selfish ambition of the emperor trampling under foot the liberties of the Austrians. The poems are as unlike as possible in style and treatment. Macaulay's ballad is a narrative poem and he stirs our blood with the tale of a noble deed. He tells something about the character but nothing about the appearance of the persons in his ballad. In his brief poem Browning makes the emperor and the lad live before us. It is as if we saw them move and heard them speak. Browning was a dramatic poet, and he shows it even in a narrative poem like this. He delighted in portraying character, the thoughts and feelings of men and women, especially at critical moments in their lives. Sometimes his poems are in the form of regular dramas. Sometimes he represents men or women standing alone, speaking to themselves or others words which reveal their characters and lives. Even his narrative and lyric poems have a dramatic quality.

The *Incident of the French Camp* was published in 1843 in a small volume entitled *Dramatic Lyrics*. The author, Robert Browning, was a young man who had published several volumes of poems. Few of his poems were popular; people said they were too obscure in expression, too hard to understand.

Robert Browning was born at Camberwell, near London, May 7, 1812. His parents were wealthy, and gave him every advantage in education and training. When a child he loved books and pictures

and music so well that he could not decide whether he wished to be a poet, a painter, or a musician. The poetic instinct triumphed, and he devoted himself to literature. His poems are full of love and appreciation of the arts of music and painting.

His first published poem was *Pauline,* which appeared in 1833, and his next was *Paracelsus,* a drama, published in 1835. *Sordello,* one of his most characteristic works, appeared in 1840. This was followed by many other volumes, which were slow to win their way to popular favor, though they were appreciated by poets. Words of praise from the famous poetess, Elizabeth Barrett, led to a personal acquaintance, which ripened into love. In 1846 they were married and went to Italy. There they lived, happy in their love and art, until Mrs. Browning's death in 1861. Browning died at Venice, May 12, 1889.

The Ring and the Book is considered his greatest poem. It is his longest, containing over twenty thousand lines of blank verse. It is dramatic in character, but it is a drama of thought rather than of action. Eleven persons tell in eleven different ways the story of a murder in Rome.

Browning's thoughts were deep and often remote, and he frequently expressed them in rugged, obscure language. Therefore he is not so popular nor so widely read as many authors far inferior to him. He wrote several poems which are generally popular with young folks. Among these are *The Pied Piper of*

Hamelin, How they Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix, Hervé Riel and *Pippa Passes.*

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

I

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:
A mile or so away,
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming day;
With neck outthrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

II

Just as perhaps he mused, "My plans
That soar the earth may fall,
Let once my army leader Lannes
Waver at yonder wall," —
Out 'twixt the battery smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full galloping; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

5. **With neck, etc.:** These lines are an instance of the way in which Browning makes us see things. This portrait of Napoleon is as characteristic and as vivid as a painting.

7. **Prone:** Bending forward; inclined.

11. **Lannes:** Marshal Lannes, one of the most famous of Napoleon's famous marshals, or army leaders.

III

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy:
You hardly could suspect —
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

IV

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace
We've got you Ratisbon!
The Marshal's in the market place,
And you'll be there anon
To see your flag bird flap his vans
Where I, to heart's desire,
Perched him!" The chief's eye flashed; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

V

The chief's eye flashed; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother eagle's eye

28. **Anon:** Soon; literally, in one, immediately.

29. **Vans:** Used in its literal sense, wings. As the banner waved in air, the eagle on it seemed to flap its wings.

When her bruised eaglet breathes;
"You're wounded!" "Nay," the soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said:
"I'm killed, Sire!" And his chief beside,
Smiling the boy fell dead.

39. **Sire:** Father, — a title of respect used in addressing a king or emperor.

LINES ON WASHINGTON

Introductory Note

The five poems which you have read are narrative poems. Each was written to tell a story. The poems, *Horatius* and *Incident of the French Camp*, tell the deeds of brave men, and tell, also, the characters of the doers. As you read the poem of *Horatius*, the words and actions of the hero inform you as to his character. His volunteering to defend the bridge shows that he was a brave and skillful soldier as well as a patriot. The words with which he devotes himself to the task show piety and other noble traits.

These lines, by Lowell, do not tell a story, but they describe a character. The poet portrays the traits of a man's heart and soul as a careful artist might portray the traits of his face and figure. This pen picture is of especial interest because it describes a man whom we all love and honor. We look at the picture and say, "This feature is like him," "How true to life is the whole!" For this pen picture is a description of our great national hero, Washington, the man whom all parties and all sections revere as the Father of his Country.

Washington, Lowell reminds us, was both a statesman and a patriot. It is rare to find a man who is both, for the soldier is usually too much the man of action and the statesman too much the man of thought and words. Washington the soldier secured the independence of his country, and Washington the statesman shaped its national affairs. It seemed as easy and natural to him to perform great duties as to breathe. He accepted the honors of the world with modest indifference, as if he deserved them no more than did other men. He asked nothing for himself, except from God, but he eloquently pleaded the cause of his suffering soldiers. He was modest yet firm. Men who were jealous of him and inferior to him found fault with him, but neither their blame nor the prospect of immediate advantage led him to forsake the right course. He was neither rash nor cowardly. Severe he was, but more severe with himself than with others. He did not court popular favor, but sought to do right. Broad of mind and high of soul, his fame belongs to the world, not merely to America. Such was Washington.

Read the lines of Lowell carefully to get their full meaning. Observe the traits of character which the poet mentions as distinguishing Washington from other men. Can you recall events in his life in which these traits were shown?

These lines are taken from *Under the Elm*, an eloquent patriotic poem by Lowell. It was written in

honor of the hundredth anniversary of Washington's taking charge of the Continental Army. This anniversary was celebrated at Cambridge, July 3, 1875, under the old elm beneath which Washington stood on that eventful day. Appropriate addresses were made and this poem was read. Men's hearts swelled with joy and pride at thought of their great and noble country, the independence of which had been won by patriots a hundred years before.

LINES ON WASHINGTON

Soldier and statesman, rarest unison;
High-poised example of great duties done
Simply as breathing, a world's honors worn
As life's indifferent gifts to all men born;
Dumb for himself, unless it were to God,
But for his barefoot soldiers eloquent,
Tramping the snow to coral where they trod,
Held by his awe in hollow-eyed content;
Modest, yet firm as Nature's self; unblamed
Save by the men his nobler temper shamed;
Never seduced through show of present good
By other than unsetting lights to steer
New-trimmed in Heaven, nor than his steadfast mood

7. Tramping the snow to coral: Making the snow red, like coral. Give an account of the condition of the American troops during the winter at Valley Forge.

More steadfast, far from rashness as from fear;
Rigid, but with himself first, grasping still
In swerveless poise the wave-beat helm of will;
Not honored then or now because he wooed
The popular voice but that he still withstood;
Broad-minded, higher-souled, there is but one
Who was all this and ours, and all men's — WASHINGTON.

LINES FROM UNDER THE WILLOWS

Introductory Note

Winter lingers late in New England. There May, which, farther south, is the month of birds and blossoms, is often bleak with snow and chill with east winds. If here and there hardy blossoms peep forth, the frost is ready to blight their tender beauty. But have patience. The chill days slip past, and June comes — June, "the high tide of the year," as it is well called by a New England poet.

Lowell has more than one beautiful description of June. The prelude, or introduction, to the first part of *The Vision of Sir Launfal* contains an exquisite picture of summer. "What is so rare as a day in June?" asks the poet, and then he depicts, not only the outward beauty, but the very spirit of the season. In the opening lines of *Under the Willows*, also, Lowell gives a picture of June in New England.

In the sketch which you read of his life, you learned that Lowell was a scholar and a statesman. He edited literary magazines and wrote learned essays. He loved books and was familiar with the languages and literatures of many lands.

But he was no mere bookworm and scholar. The outdoor world was dear to him, and when June came he loved to put aside his books and wander forth to drink in the beauty of the scenes around him. At his very door were bird and tree neighbors. Elmwood was surrounded with noble elm and ash trees, the homes and haunts of birds. Year after year Lowell watched the trees bud and become "leafy tents." Year after year he welcomed back the winged songsters. While days were yet chill, came the swallow and the cheery bluebird to announce that spring was on the way. With June rose the full bird chorus. Robin, bobolink, and oriole gladdened with song their neighbor at Elmwood.

Near the poet's home at Elmwood was a group of willows of which he was very fond. Many an hour he loitered there, watching with loving, intent eyes the birds and trees. Many an hour he lingered there weaving beautiful thoughts into beautiful words. Under these willows he composed the greater part of a poem descriptive of spring in New England, and therefore he gave this title, *Under the Willows*, to the poem. This is the first and title poem in a volume of poems which Lowell published in 1867. It contains, among other poems, *The First Snowfall* and *The Singing Leaves*.

You have already read *The Singing Leaves*, and you remember how Lowell pauses in his story to mention the musical pine trees and "pattering aspen." *Rhœcus*,

too, bears witness to his love of trees, being founded upon the beautiful old Greek belief in dryads. In *The Birch Tree*, *To a Pine Tree*, *The Oak*, *The Maple*, and many other poems, Lowell described with loving accuracy the appearance and character — we may almost say, the soul — of his tree friends.

LINES FROM UNDER THE WILLOWS

Frank-hearted hostess of the field and wood,
Gypsy, whose roof is every spreading tree,
June is the pearl of our New England year.
Still a surprisal, though expected long,
Her coming startles. Long she lies in wait,
Makes many a feint, peeps forth, draws coyly back,
Then, from some southern ambush in the sky,
With one great gush of blossom storms the world.

A week ago the sparrow was divine;
The bluebird, shifting his light load of song
From post to post along the cheerless fence,
Was as a rhymer ere the poet come;
But now, oh rapture! sunshine winged and voiced,
Pipe blown through by the warm, wild breath of the West
Shepherding his soft droves of fleecy cloud,
Gladness of woods, skies, waters, all in one,

6. Feint: Pretence.

The bobolink has come, and, like the soul
Of the sweet season vocal in a bird,
Gurgles in ecstasy we know not what
Save *June! Dear June! Now God be praised for June.*

May is a pious fraud of the almanac,
A ghastly parody of real Spring
Shaped out of snow and breathed with eastern wind;
Or, if o'er-confident, she trust the date,
And with her handful of anemones,
Herself as shivery, steal into the sun,
The season need but turn his hour glass round,
And Winter, suddenly, like crazy Lear,
Reels back, and brings the dead May in his arms,
Her budding breasts and wan dislustered front
With frosty streaks and drifts of his white beard
All overblown. Then, warmly walled with books,
While my wood fire supplies the sun's defect,
Whispering old forest sagas in its dreams,
I take my May down from the happy shelf

28. **Crazy Lear, etc.:** As King Lear, the poor old crazed king, in Shakespeare's play of that name, bore in his arms his dear dead daughter Cordelia, so Lowell represents winter as bringing back the spring.

30. **Dislustered:** Deprived of light, as the light of life.

34. **Sagas, etc.:** It is, the poet says, as if the wood poured out the sunshine it has garnered up during its years in the forest, and tells old tales of woodland life.

Where perch the world's rare song birds in a row,
Waiting my choice to open with full breast,
And beg an alms of springtime, ne'er denied
Indoors by vernal Chaucer, whose fresh woods
Throb thick with merle and mavis all the year.

July breathes hot, sallows the crispy fields,
Curls up the wan leaves of the lilac hedge,
And every eve cheats us with show of clouds
That braze the horizon's western rim, or hang
Motionless, with heaped canvas drooping idly,
Like a dim fleet by starving men besieged,
Conjectured half, and half descried afar,
Helpless of wind, and seeming to slip back
Adown the smooth curve of the oily sea.

But June is full of invitations sweet,
Forth from the chimney's yawn and thrice-read tomes
To leisurely delights and sauntering thoughts
That brook no ceiling narrower than the blue.
The cherry, drest for bridal, at my pane
Brushes, then listens, *Will he come?* The bee,
All dusty as a miller, takes his toll

39. **Vernal Chaucer:** The English poet Chaucer gives in his poems many beautiful descriptions of spring. His great poem, the Canterbury Tales, begins with exquisite words about spring.

40. **Merle:** Blackbird. **Mavis:** Song thrush.

44. **Braze:** Make like brass in appearance.

Of powdery gold, and grumbles. What a day
To sun me and do nothing! Nay, I think
Merely to bask and ripen is sometimes
The student's wiser business; the brain
That forages all climes to line its cells,
Ranging both worlds on lightest wings of wish,
Will not distill the juices it has sucked
To the sweet substance of pellucid thought,
Except for him who hath the secret learned
To mix his blood with sunshine, and to take
The winds into his pulses. Hush! 'tis he!
My oriole, my glance of summer fire,
Is come at last, and, ever on the watch,
Twitches the pack thread I had lightly wound
About the bough to help his housekeeping, —
Twitches and scouts by turns, blessing his luck,
Yet fearing me who laid it in his way,
Nor, more than wiser we in our affairs,
Divines the providence that hides and helps.
Heave, ho! Heave, ho! he whistles as the twine
Slackens its hold; *once more, now!* and a flash
Lightens across the sunlight to the elm
Where his mate dangles at her cup of felt.
Nor all his booty is the thread; he trails
My loosened thought with it along the air,
And I must follow, would I ever find
The inward rhyme to all this wealth of life.

61. **To line its cells, etc.:** To what does the poet here compare the brain? What are some of the points of likeness?

APOSTROPHE TO THE OCEAN

Introductory Note

You have read of Lowell's keen delight in nature, and how especially he loved birds and trees. As dear as were birds and trees to our American poet, was the ocean to the English poet, Lord Byron. He loved it in its every mood — beautiful and shining under the summer sun or storm-tossed and white with breakers. His finest poem contains an eloquent passage addressed to the ocean. The stanzas have been read and committed to memory by many a schoolboy and many a schoolgirl. To enjoy them thoroughly you must picture to yourself the scene on which Byron looked and understand the thoughts which it suggested to him.

Shut your eyes and fancy that you see before you the dark blue sea. Its waves break on the shore at your feet, its waters stretch away, away as far as eye can reach, till sea and sky melt into one on the horizon. Hour after hour you watch it, ever changing yet still the same. The waves rise, the waves fall, and still they rise and fall and break into spray. As it is to-day, so was it yesterday and a hundred years ago. As it was then, so will it be to-morrow and a hundred years

hence. The earth owns man's lordship. On it he builds his cities and founds his empires; he furrows its fields, lays low its forests, and scars its face with his wrecks and ruins. But the sea mocks him to scorn. So far from being subject to him, it destroys him and the work of his hands. Free and unmastered, a thing of beauty and terror, majesty and mystery, it lies before us.

In the closing stanzas, Byron expresses his personal feeling. He speaks of his love for the ocean, his delight, from childhood, in the world of waters, his sympathy with the wild, free spirit of the deep.

The first recollections of Byron's childhood were of the sea, the rough shores of Aberdeenshire in Scotland. His mother was a Scotch lady who married a dissipated young Englishman, Captain John Byron. They had one child, a son, George Gordon Byron, born January 22, 1788. When he was only a few months old his father went abroad and was never heard of again. Captain Byron had already spent most of his wife's property, and the poor lady took her young son and returned to her girlhood home in Scotland. She was naturally a peevish, ill-tempered, passionate woman, and troubles had embittered instead of softening and sweetening her nature. She was as unwise and capricious as possible in her treatment of her son. One moment she would overwhelm him with caresses, the next she would beat and abuse him as a "lame brat,"

He was a wayward, self-willed child, bright and active in spite of the lameness in one foot which afflicted him from birth.

When he was only ten years old, at the death of his father's uncle, he inherited the English estate of Newstead Abbey and the title of Lord Byron. He attended school and college, but he neglected his regular studies for general reading. When he was nineteen, he published a volume of verse, entitled *Hours of Idleness*, which gave little promise of his future eminence.

When he was twenty-one, he went abroad and spent two years traveling in Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Turkey. The beauty and historic interest of the scenes appealed to him, and he wrote a poem entitled *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, containing descriptions of these scenes and the thoughts they suggested.

Two cantos, or parts, of this poem were published in 1812, and won high and immediate place in public favor. Byron said, in speaking of his sudden renown, "I went to bed one night and got up to find myself famous."

Byron wrote rapidly and *Childe Harold* was followed by several Eastern poem-tales, which delighted English readers, — *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, and *Lara*. The hero of each of these poems was a gloomy, wreckless, unhappy man, disappointed and embittered by his experience with the world. In the character of these heroes, people said, Byron depicted his own. The wayward, self-willed boy had

grown to be a wayward, self-willed man. Moody and reckless, he brought unhappiness on himself and others.

In 1815 he married Miss Milbanke, but from the first there were disagreements and in a year the union was dissolved. People condemned Lord Byron, and "the most popular poet was the most unpopular man in England." He went abroad and wandered restlessly through Belgium, France, Switzerland, and Italy. He wrote brilliant and powerful poems which reflected his reckless, gloomy, and wicked life.

In 1818 he finished *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the poem which first won and will longest preserve his fame. The third canto was written at Geneva in Switzerland, and the fourth and best was written in Italy, chiefly at Venice. In this beautiful city of the sea was written the eloquent address to the ocean, which is one of the finest passages in the poem.

The Prisoner of Chillon and *Mazeppa* are the most popular of Byron's shorter poems. His tragedies, *Cain, Manfred,* and others, mirror the author's proud and bitter spirit. This spirit marred the beauty and power of *Don Juan*, Byron's last great literary work.

In 1821 the Greeks, who had for three centuries endured the tyranny of Turkish rule, began a war to establish their independence. Byron threw himself heart and soul into the noble cause. He went to Greece in 1823, and aided the patriots with money and personal service. He was attacked by fever and died in Greece, April 19, 1824.

Lord Byron's poems are witty and brilliant, and full of feeling. He loved nature, and described eloquently the beauty of hill and waterfall, valley and mountain, — and, above all, the beauty and grandeur of the sea. In his narrative romantic poems, he is always his own hero, — proud, gloomy, at war with the world. He had great powers, but he lacked the balance of a noble character.

APOSTROPHE TO THE OCEAN

I

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:
I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

II

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean, roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin, his control
Stops with the shore; upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain

A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown.

III

His steps are not upon thy paths, thy fields
Are not a spoil for him, — thou dost arise
And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray
And howling, to his gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port or bay,
And dashest him again to earth: — there let him lay.

IV

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake
And monarchs tremble in their capitals,
The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make
Their clay creator the vain title take
Of lord of thee and arbiter of war, —

27. **Lay:** Is this expression grammatically correct? What word ought to be used here? What objection is there to the use of the correct word?

28. **Armaments:** Bodies of troops, armed for war.

31. **Leviathans:** Monsters, — from a huge water animal described in Job.

These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake,
They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
Alike the Armada's pride, or spoils of Trafalgar.

V

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee —
Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?
Thy waters washed them power while they were free,
And many a tyrant since; their shores obey
The stranger, slave, or savage; their decay
Has dried up realms to deserts: — not so thou,
Unchangeable save to thy wild waves' play;
Time writes no wrinkles on thine azure brow;
Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

VI

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempest; in all time,

36. **Armada:** The great fleet sent by Spain in 1588 against England. It owed its destruction as much to the winds and waves as to the valor of the English seamen.

Tra fal gar': A famous naval battle fought in 1805, off Cape Trafalgar, on the southern coast of Spain. In it the English forces under Admiral Nelson defeated and destroyed the united fleets of Spain and France.

38. **Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage:** The four great empires of the ancient world, all of which were established on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. All have long since passed away, leaving as records of their power a few ruins on the land but no signs on the sea.

Calm or convulsed — in breeze, or gale, or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
Dark-heaving; — boundless, endless, and sublime —
The image of Eternity — the throne
Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime
The monsters of the deep are made; each zone
Obeys thee; thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

VII

And I have loved thee, Ocean! and my joy
Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be
Borne, like thy bubbles, onward. From a boy
I wantoned with thy breakers — they to me
Were a delight; and if the freshening sea
Made them a terror — 'twas a pleasing fear,
For I was as it were a child of thee,
And trusted to thy billows far and near,
And laid my hand upon thy mane — as I do here.

VIII

My task is done — my song hath ceased — my theme
Has died into an echo; it is fit
The spell should break of this protracted dream.
The torch shall be extinguished which hath lit
My midnight lamp — and what is writ is writ, —

58. **Wantoned:** Sported.

Would it were worthier! but I am not now
That which I have been — and my visions flit
Less palpably before me — and the glow
Which in my spirit dwelt, is fluttering, faint, and low.

TO A SKYLARK

Introductory Note

What music pours from the throats of birds! Each winged songster has his part in the world chorus of beauty and joy. The bluebird and the robin seem the voice of spring, expressing the joy of earth at the passing of winter, the freshness and charm of the growing, budding springtime. The chirp of the wren and the twitter of the despised sparrow bring cheer to gloomy days. And what exquisite melody is the song of the oriole and the mocking-bird!

There are few hearts so dull as not to delight in bird songs. But poets, whose natures are so in tune with the music and beauty of earth, have loved them with an especial love. Many poems have had bird songs as their subject and their inspiration.

Our American poets have sung the praises of our American birds. Bryant, Longfellow, Lowell, Whittier, Lanier, Thaxter, and Larcom have celebrated in verse our robins, bluebirds, orioles, bobolinks, and mocking-birds, even our wrens, sparrows, and crows. But the most beautiful poem inspired by a bird was written by an English poet about a bird not known to

us in America. This is the skylark which is found in Europe.

The skylark's song is wonderfully sweet and it sings on the wing. As it rises from the earth, it begins its song. Higher and higher it mounts in the air, until it is a mere speck against a cloud; down drop its sweet, clear, liquid notes, like a voice from the skies. No wonder this beautiful sky song has been loved by poets and celebrated in their songs. Shakespeare said of it, "Hark, hark: the lark at heaven's gate sings." Shelley, Wordsworth, and Hogg all wrote poems about the skylark. The poem of Shelley as far surpasses the others as does the skylark's song that of other birds. It is as if other poets, like other birds, sang on earth, and Shelley mounted up to heaven with the lark.

Shelley was not in his native land when he wrote this poem. He was in the beautiful land of Italy. It was a congenial abiding-place for the young poet, with his constant and intense delight in all that was fair and beautiful.

He wandered forth one evening when the air was purple with twilight. He looked with gentle, loving eyes on the fair scene — but upward, not downward. He neither noted nor cared whether gardens or forests, cities or mountains, were around him. But he saw with delight the golden orb of the setting sun, the fleecy clouds in the deep blue heaven.

All at once the sweet hush of evening was broken by sweet music, the song of a skylark. It rose singing

and singing, rose higher and higher. No words, it seemed to the poet, could tell what this glorious songster is nor describe his song. He sought, then, to find what is most like this "sprite or bird."

He compared it to a poet by his sweet songs winning men to share his noble thoughts, to a fair maiden singing love songs in a palace tower, to a glow-worm shedding abroad light, to a rose scattering fragrance. The bird-song, joyful, clear, and fresh, reminded him of spring rain falling on grass and flowers, but even that is less joyful, clear, and fresh. He went back to his first thought, — the poet expressing his beautiful thoughts in musical words. But no poet ever sang on his favorite subjects — love, feasting, or victory — with the joyous sweetness of this bird. He longed to know the source, the subject of its music. It seemed to express all the beauty of earth and love, without the sadness, the regret, the shadow of past or future pain, which is in the human song. Shelley longed for the skill of the lark. It seemed to him that if he could know the gladness of the bird he could sing a song as sweet, to delight men as the lark's song delighted him.

The poem suggests the flight of the bird, its rise, its pauses, and then its soaring upward in musical flight. Words never expressed more exquisitely the spirit of melody, the rapture of music, than in this poem.

As you read it, you get the melody and spirit of the skylark's song.

Of all English poets, Shelley is the sweetest singer,

— the most lyrical, as critics say. His voice is like the bird song, a high, sweet note of ideal beauty.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born at Field Place, in Sussex, England, August 4, 1792. As a child he cared little for outdoor sports. He was an eager and interested reader, especially of romance and science. In bed, at table, walking the fields or the crowded city streets, he generally had a book in his hand. He was animated from childhood by a passionate hatred of wrong and injustice, and an eager desire to help the poor and troubled and oppressed.

He early began to express in prose and verse his thoughts — especially his hatred of sham and cruelty and injustice. The lack which he saw in the world of men of beauty and truth and love led him to reject the usual political and religious beliefs.

The publication of a little pamphlet expressing his views, led to his being expelled from college and banished from his father's house. The gentle, sensitive poet was utterly unfit for a contest with poverty, but he was not of a nature to yield an opinion, right or wrong, for the sake of wordly gain. He struggled on, as ready in poverty as he had been in wealth to help others, giving away his last coin and then pawning his beloved books to help a poor widow or a needy scholar.

In 1813 appeared *Queen Mab*, Shelley's first important poem, and it was followed by *Alastor* and other poems, giving melodious expression to extravagant

thoughts. In 1818 Shelley went to Italy, and there the last four years of his life were spent and his finest poems written. His drama, *The Cenci,* is regarded as the greatest English tragedy since Shakespeare; *Prometheus Unbound,* another poem dramatic in form, is wonderfully musical in expression. But his best known and best loved poems are the shorter ones, especially his lyrics. Among these are *To a Skylark, To a Cloud, Invocation to Night,* and *Ode to the West Wind. Adonais,* written on the death of Keats, is the most exquisite of dirges.

Shelley was soon to lie beside his brother-poet. On the afternoon of July 8, 1822, he was sailing on the Bay of Spezzia. His frail boat was upset and all on board were drowned. His body was washed ashore a few days later, and his ashes were buried near the grave of Keats, in a cemetery at Rome.

TO A SKYLARK

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest

Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run,
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of heaven,
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight.

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see,
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not;

Like a highborn maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower;

Like a glowworm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aërial hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view;

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,

Till the scent it gives
Make faint with too much sweet these heavy-
wingèd thieves

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymeneal,
Or triumphal chaunt,
Matched with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?

61. **Sprite:** A contracted form of the word spirit.
66. **Hymeneal:** Relating to marriage.

What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? What ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest; but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught:
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

76. **Joyance:** A poetical word, meaning joy, gayety.
80. **Knew:** Grammatically not the correct form, but that needed by the music of the line.
82. **Deem:** Think.
89. **Fraught:** Freighted; laden.

Yet if we could scorn
  Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
  Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
  Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
  That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
  That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
  From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then, as I am listening now.

EIGHTH GRADE SELECTIONS FOR MEMORIZING

THE SONG OF THE CAMP

By Bayard Taylor

Taylor (1825–1878) was an American author of prose and verse.

"Give us a song!" the soldiers cried,
The outer trenches guarding,
When the heated guns of the camps allied
Grew weary of bombarding.

The dark Redan, in silent scoff,
Lay, grim and threatening, under;
And the tawny mound of the Malakoff
No longer belched its thunder.

There was a pause. A guardsman said:
"We storm the forts to-morrow;

2. **The outer trenches:** The scene of this poem is the English camp during the siege of Sebastopol in the Crimean war. This war was waged in 1854–5 by the English and French against the Russians, to repel the Russian advances towards Turkey.

5, 7. **Redan, Malakoff:** Two Russian batteries.

Sing while we may, another day
Will bring enough of sorrow."

They lay along the battery's side,
Below the smoking cannon, —
Brave hearts, from Severn and from Clyde,
And from the banks of Shannon.

They sang of love, and not of fame;
Forgot was Britain's glory;
Each heart recalled a different name,
But all sang "Annie Laurie."

Voice after voice caught up the song,
Until its tender passion
Rose like an anthem rich and strong, —
Their battle eve confession.

Dear girl! her name he dared not speak;
But as the song grew louder,
Something upon the soldier's cheek
Washed off the stains of powder.

Beyond the darkening ocean burned
The bloody sunset's embers,
While the Crimean valleys learned
How English love remembers.

15, 16. **Severn, Clyde, Shannon:** Where are these rivers?
20. **Annie Laurie:** A well-known love song by William Douglas, a Scotch poet.

And once again a fire of hell
Rained on the Russian quarters,
With scream of shot and burst of shell,
And bellowing of the mortars!

And Irish Nora's eyes are dim
For a singer dumb and gory;
And English Mary mourns for him
Who sang of "Annie Laurie."

Sleep, soldiers! still in honored rest
Your truth and valor wearing;
The bravest are the tenderest, —
The loving are the daring.

"O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!"

By Walt Whitman

Whitman (1819–1892) was an American poet. This poem was written on the assassination of President Lincoln.

O captain! my captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring.
But, O heart! heart! heart!

Oh, the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O captain! my captain! rise up and hear the bells!
Rise up! for you the flag is flung, for you the bugle
thrills,
For you bouquets and ribboned wreaths, for you the
shores a-crowding;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces
turning.
Here, captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck
You've fallen cold and dead!

My captain does not answer, his lips are pale and
still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor
will.
The ship is anchored safe and sound, its voyage closed
and done;
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with
object won.
Exult, O shores! and ring, O bells!
But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

THE BUGLE SONG

By Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Tennyson (1809–1892) was an English poet.

The splendor falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story:
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river:
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow forever and forever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

THE ANGLER'S REVEILLE

By Henry Van Dyke

Van Dyke (1852–) is a popular American author.

What time the rose of dawn is laid across the lips
of night,
And all the drowsy little stars have fallen asleep
in light;
'Tis then a wandering mind awakens, and runs
from tree to tree,
And borrows words from all the birds to sound the
reveille.

This is the carol the Robin throws
Over the edge of the valley;
Listen how boldly it flows,
Sally on sally:

Tirra lirra,
Down the river,
Laughing water
All a-quiver,
Day is near,

4. **Reveille:** Summons to arise. The military signal is a drum beat at daybreak. The correct pronunciation of the word is *re veil' le* (ya) but in the United States is commonly pronounced *rĕv' a lé* and that is the pronunciation which Dr. Van Dyke uses here.

Clear, clear.
Fish are breaking,
Time for waking.
Tup, tup, tup!
Do you hear?
All clear—
Wake up!

The phantom flood of dreams has ebbed and vanished with the dark,
And like a dove the heart forsakes the prison of the ark;
Now forth she fares through friendly woods and diamond-fields of dew,
While every voice cries out "Rejoice!" as if the world were new.

This is the ballad the Bluebird sings,
Unto his mate replying,
Shaking the tune from his wings
While he is flying:

Surely, surely, surely,
Life is dear
Even here.
Blue above,
You to love,
Purely, purely, purely.

There's wild azalea on the hill, and roses down the dell,
And just one spray of lilac still abloom beside the well;
The columbine adorns the rocks, the laurel buds grow pink,
Along the stream white arums gleam, and violets bend to drink.

This is the song of the Yellowthroat,
Fluttering gaily beside you;
Hear how each voluble note
Offers to guide you:

Which way, sir?
I say, sir,
Let me teach you,
I beseech you!
Are you wishing
Jolly fishing?
This way, sir!
I'll teach you.

Then come, my friend, forget your foes, and leave your fears behind,
And wander forth to try your luck, with cheerful, quiet mind;
For be your fortune great or small, you'll take what God may give,
And all the day your heart shall say, "'Tis luck enough to live."

This is the song the Brown Thrush flings
Out of his thicket of roses;
Hark how it warbles and rings,
Mark how it closes:

Luck, luck,
What luck?
Good enough for me!
I'm alive, you see.
Sun shining,
No repining;

Never borrow
Idle sorrow;
Drop it!
Cover it up!
Hold your cup!
Joy will fill it,
Don't spill it,
Steady, be ready,
Good luck!

HARK!

By William Shakespeare

Shakespeare (1564–1616) was the greatest of English poets.

Hark, hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phœbus 'gins arise,
His steeds to water at those springs
On chaliced flowers that lies:
And winking Mary-buds begin
To ope their golden eyes;
With everything that pretty bin,
My lady sweet, arise:
Arise, arise!

2. **Phœbus:** Phœbus-Apollo, the sun-god of Greek mythology.
5. **Mary-buds:** Marigolds.

MY NATIVE LAND

By Sir Walter Scott

Scott (1771–1832) was a Scotch novelist and poet. This selection is from his poem, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel.*

Breathes there the man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
"This is my own, my native land!"
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned
From wandering on a foreign strand?

If such there breathe, go, mark him well!
For him no minstrel raptures swell.
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim —
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentered all in self,
Living shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung.

BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC

By Julia Ward Howe

Mrs. Howe (1819–) is an American author. This poem was a "battle hymn" of the war between the States.

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps;
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps:
His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel, writ in burnished rows of steel:
"As ye deal with My contemners, so My grace with you shall deal";
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel,
Since God is marching on.

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat:
Oh! be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me:
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.

SPEECH AT GETTYSBURG

By Abraham Lincoln

President Lincoln (1809–1865) delivered this address at the dedication of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg, November 15, 1863.

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have

come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here; but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

AT MORNING

By Robert Louis Stevenson

Stevenson (1850–1899) was a Scotch novelist and poet.

The day returns and brings us the petty round of irritating concerns and duties. Help us to play the man, help us to perform them with laughter and kind

faces, let cheerfulness abound with industry, give us to go blithely on our business all this day, bring us to our resting beds weary and content and undishonored, and grant us in the end the gift of sleep.

ON BOOKS

By Hamilton Wright Mabie

(1846–). An American author.

The same book may be read in entirely different ways and with entirely different results. One may, for instance, read Shakespeare's historical plays simply for the story element which runs through them, and for the interest which the skillful use of that element excites; and in such a reading there will be distinct gain for the reader. This is the way in which a healthy boy generally reads these plays for the first time. From such a reading one will get information and refreshment; more than one English statesman has confessed that he owed his knowledge of certain periods of English history largely to Shakespeare. On the other hand, one may read these plays for the joy of the art that is in them, and for the enrichment which comes from contact with the deep and tumultuous life which throbs through them; and this is the kind of reading which produces culture, the reading which means enlargement and ripening.